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**Diplomová práce**

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**The Noun Phrase in Written and Spoken Academic Discourse**

Substantivní fráze v psaném a mluveném akademickém diskurzu

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V Praze dne 25. července 2016

.....

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## Abstrakt

Předmětem této diplomové práce je zkoumání rozdílů mezi substantivními frázemi v mluveném a psaném akademickém monologu. Práce se zabývá zejména délkou frází, jejich vnitřní komplexností a syntaktickou funkcí. Teoretická část se zabývá jednotlivými součástmi substantivní fráze, její strukturou a užíváním. Substantivní fráze je také popsána jako jeden z prostředků komplexní kondenzace textu. Teoretická část také uvádí základní charakteristiky psaného a mluveného akademického jazyka. Praktická část práce sestává z podrobné analýzy 210 substantivních frází. Vzorek psaného jazyka pochází z vybraných akademických článků, zatímco vzorek mluvený pochází ze sbírky přednášek korpusu BASE. Jelikož se praktická část zabývá dvěma různými formami jazyka, materiál se analyzoval pro každý vzorek zvlášť a výsledky byly srovnány v závěrečné části jednotlivých podkapitol. Hypotéza práce předpokládá, že vzorek psaného jazyka obsahuje fráze se složitější modifikací, zatímco vzorek jazyka mluveného obsahuje více jednoduchých frází a více modifikací pomocí vedlejší věty. Hypotéza se z větší části potvrdila.

**Klíčová slova:** substantivní fráze, psaný akademický text, mluvené přednášky, modifikace, komplexnost, délka, syntaktická funkce

## Abstract

The diploma thesis is concerned with exploring the differences between the noun phrases in written and spoken academic monologue, focussing on the length of the phrase, its internal complexity and syntactic functions. In the theoretical part of the study, the noun phrase, its constituents, structure and usage are introduced. The noun phrase is introduced as

one of the means of complex condensation. The basic characteristics of written and spoken academic language are introduced as well. The practical part of the study is a detailed analysis of 210 noun phrases. The written sample is collected from selected academic articles, whereas the sample of spoken lecture is collected from the lecture database of the BASE corpus. Since the study focuses on two different forms of language, the material is analysed for each of them separately and the results are subsequently compared in the final part of each subsection. The hypothesis of the thesis is that the written sample contains noun phrases with more complex modification, whereas the spoken sample contains more simple noun phrases and more clausal modification. The hypothesis was, for the most part, confirmed.

**Key Words:** noun phrase, written academic text, spoken lectures, modification, complexity, length, syntactic function

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## List of Abbreviations

BASE – Corpus of British Academic Spoken English

CGEL – A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language (Quirk et al., 1985)

LGSWE - Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English (Biber et al., 1999)

NP – Noun Phrase



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# 1. Introduction

The subject of the present thesis is the noun phrase in written and spoken academic discourse.

The academic language in general is structurally condensed, with the aim of getting the message across in a manner that is as efficient as possible. However, there are differences between its written and spoken form. The written form appears to share some features with conversation and therefore although “both conversation and professional academic writing are structurally complex [...] their complexities are dramatically different. (Biber and Gray 2010: 3)

The hypothesis of this thesis is that the noun phrase in written academic articles has more complex structure than the spoken lectures. It is expected to comprise more complex modification (both pre- and postmodification) and to be in general longer than the noun phrase in the spoken lectures, which are expected to use simple noun phrases more frequently. There are also likely to be differences in the realization forms of modifiers within the noun phrase between the spoken and written academic monologue.

Furthermore, the lectures are expected to contain noun phrases more frequently premodified by adjectives and postmodified by clausal means, whereas the written articles are expected to use premodification in form of a noun phrase and postmodification in form of a prepositional phrase. The syntactic functions of the noun phrases are expected to be comparable in both written and spoken academic language.

In order to explore the structure and syntactic functions of the noun phrase in academic language the present thesis relies on articles published in academic journals and on lectures given at British universities.

The thesis is divided into two parts: the theoretical and the practical part. The theoretical part consists of a brief introduction of the noun phrase and of written and spoken academic English. The practical part consists of a description of the method used for the analysis and a comparison of the noun phrase types, their length, syntactic function and forms of their premodification and postmodification. A brief summary and a conclusion follows at the end of the thesis.

# 1. The Noun Phrase – An Introduction

This chapter provides a basic introduction of the noun phrase and a summary of its structure.

## 1.1. Constituents of the Noun Phrase

The noun phrase “can be used as a cover term for two types of constructions: noun-headed phrase and pronoun-headed phrase.” (Biber et al., 1999: 574) The structure of the NP as a whole depends on the word class of the head.

If the phrase is headed by a noun, it has four major components. Two of these components are obligatory and two are optional. The obligatory components are the head and the determiner, the optional constituents are the premodification and the postmodification.<sup>1</sup>

If the phrase is headed by a pronoun, the four constituents remain the same, however, this type of noun phrase usually cannot contain a determiner, which is therefore not an obligatory constituent.

### 1.1.1. The Head

The head is the main constituent of a noun phrase, “around which (for the most part) other constituents cluster and which dictates concord with other parts of the sentence” (Quirk et al., 1985: 1238). In a noun phrase, the head can be a noun or pronoun, for example:

[The tall girl standing in the corner] is my sister. (ibid.)

[The tall girls standing in the corner] are my sisters. (ibid.)

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<sup>1</sup> In describing the structure of the noun phrase, the present thesis relies on the terminology used by Biber et al. (1999). Quirk et al. (1985) use the term ‘the determinative’ to refer to the component of the noun phrase which will be termed here ‘the determiner’.

I like [anyone who is able of doing this for me.] (author's example)

As for the structure of the noun phrase, common nouns and personal pronouns appear to be two extremes of a scale. “Common nouns are the most frequent type of a noun phrase head, and they are also the most productive head type freely occurring with both premodifiers and postmodifiers.” (Biber et al., 1999: 581) Personal pronouns are very common as well, particularly in conversation. However, their behaviour is quite different from that of common nouns. “They represent the opposite end of the continuum from nouns in the extent to which they take modifiers: examples of personal pronouns with either a premodifier or a postmodifier are quite rare.” (ibid.) Table 1 summarizes the occurrence or premodifiers and postmodifiers according to head type (ibid.):

head type	use with premodifiers	use with postmodifiers
common noun	common	common
pronoun one	moderate	very common (in writing)
indefinite pronoun	rare	common
proper noun	rare	rare (except news)
personal pronoun	rare	rare
demonstrative pronoun	rare	rare
those	unattested	very common (in writing only)
other demonstrative pronoun	unattested	relatively rare

Table 1. Co-occurrence of premodifiers and postmodifiers with different head noun types (Biber et al., 1999: 581)

Except for a few exceptions, common nouns and personal pronouns are very different in terms of their informational characteristics as well. “Nouns are often used to refer to a new referent that is previously unknown to the listener/reader. Thus pre- and postmodifiers are used to help identify the reference of the noun and provide descriptive details.” (ibid.) On the other hand, pronouns, in accordance with their contextual nature “are used to refer to

a specific entity (often a person) known to the listener/reader, either from the previous text or from the wider situational context. Consequently there is usually no need for a modifier to anchor the reference or provide elaborating details.” (ibid.)

### 1.1.2. The Determiner

The determiner is an obligatory constituent of the noun phrase which comes in front of the head. The noun phrase can contain up to three determiners whose combinability is restricted by their positional category. Three categories of determiners can be distinguished.

- Predeterminers are “all items which can precede the central determiner (including the zero article)” (Biber et al., 1999: 581), e.g. *all, both, double*.
- Central determiners are in the central position. They include articles and other central determiners. Articles comprise indefinite *a/an*, definite *the* and zero article. Other central determiners include, e.g. *this/that/every/each/no*. These “form a set of closed-class items that are mutually exclusive with each other, i.e. there cannot be more than one occurring before the noun head” (ibid., 254). Moreover “the articles have no function independent of the noun they precede. Most other determiners have the additional function of pronouns, e.g.: *some, that, and either*.” (ibid., 254-255).
- Postdeterminers are positioned mostly directly in front of the phrasal head, after predeterminers and central determiners. However, according to Quirk et al. (261) “postdeterminers follow predeterminers or central determiners (if such determiners are present). But they precede any adjectives and other premodifying items.” They include cardinal and ordinal numerals and quantifiers, *three, many, few, several* etc.

### 1.1.3. Premodification

Premodification is the first of the two optional constituents of a noun phrase. According to the *LGSWE*, there are four major types of premodification in the English language:

- The most common premodifiers are general adjectives, such as *the large house*, *sad man* or *political party*. (author's example)
- Secondly, noun phrase heads can be premodified by an *ed*-participial modifier: *structured essay*, *restricted access* or *fixed volume* (Biber et al., 1999: 588).
- The third type is *ing*-participial modifiers, such as *flashing lights* or *growing problem* (ibid.).
- The fourth type comprises noun modifiers. These include examples such as *staff meeting* or *fridge magnet*. (author's example)

As for the position of the premodifier, it is mostly attached in front of the head and after the determiner, such as *Lead is a poor conductor*. (Dušková et al., 2009: 3.31) However, there are cases where the order is different. The articles are in postposition after the modifier, when the premodifying adjective is intensified by *so*, *as*, and after *however*, such as in the following examples:

- *I hesitated to make so damaging a statement.* (ibid.)
- *This is as good a hotel as any other.* (ibid.)
- *It's too good a chance to be missed.* (ibid.)
- *Travelling on however humble a scale is expensive there.* (ibid.)



The articles are in postposition also after *no/any worse, no less*, such as: *He is no worse a doctor for being occasionally rude to his patients.* (ibid.). The postposition is optional after *rather* and *quite*:

- *a rather **unexpected** result / rather an **unexpected** result* (ibid.)
- *quite a **long** time/a quite **elementary** error.* (ibid.)

Moreover, the indefinite article is postposed in exclamative sentences, after *what* and *such* and after *many* in some literary registers:

- **What a silly** lie! (ibid.)
- *I never heard of **such** a thing!* (ibid.)
- **many** a time (ibid.)

As for the number of premodifiers, although “70-80% of premodified noun phrases have only a single modifier” (Biber et al.,1999: 597), their number is not restricted to one. Noun phrases do occur with two, three or even four premodifiers. “About 20% of premodified noun phrases have two-word premodification. Only about 2% of premodified noun phrases have three or four-word premodification.” (ibid.)

As for the order of premodifiers, “the writers and speakers will naturally arrange premodification semantically, *ie* according to their communicative intentions. However, there is no total freedom.” (Quirk et al., 1985: 1341) The order of premodifiers “is also strongly influenced by the structural type of the premodifiers.” (Biber et al.,1999: 598). Generally, the preferred order of the premodifiers is summed up as follows:

*adverb + adjective + colour adjective + participle + noun + head noun* (ibid.).

Table 2 “shows the percentage of occurrences for pairs of premodifiers in the predicted order”. (ibid.)

Adv	+	Adj	+	color Adj	+	participle	+	N	+	head N	percentage use of order	
Adv	+	Adj							+	head N	> 95	
Adv						+	participle			+	head N	> 95
		Adj	+	color Adj						+	head N	> 85
		Adj				participle				+	head N	> 65
		Adj						+	N	+	head N	> 85
				color Adj	+	participle				+	head N	> 60
				color Adj				+	N	+	head N	> 80
						participle		+	N	+	head N	> 55

Table 2. Percentage of occurrences for pairs of premodifiers (Biber et al.,1999: 598)

Other attempts to explain the preferences of ordering of premodifiers “have invoked rhythm (eg short items before longer ones); common items before rare ones; restrictive before nonrestrictive.” (Quirk et al., 1985: 1341) Furthermore the principle of subjective/objective polarity, presented by Quirk et al. (1985), suggests the following: “modifiers relating to properties which are (relatively) inherent in the head of the noun phrase, visually observable, and objectively recognizable or assessable, will tend to be placed nearer to the head and be preceded by modifiers concerned with what is relatively a matter of opinion, imposed on the head by the observer, not visually observed, and only subjectively assessable.” (ibid.)

The use of coordinated premodifiers is also particularly relevant for the academic registers. When there are two coordinated premodifiers, each of them modifies the head noun directly, e.g.: *a black and white cat, hot and hardening mud, an arrogant and unattractive man, physical and sexual abuse* (Biber et al.,1999: 601). This type of modifiers, coordinated by *and* is “very common only in academic prose” (ibid.). They are “extremely rare in conversation” (ibid.) and “relatively rare in news” (ibid.).

Premodifiers coordinated by *or*, e.g. *racial or religious cohesion, familiar or pre-planned activities* (ibid.), are “moderately common in academic prose, but rare in other

registers” (ibid.). The most frequent occurrence is in the academic register, as is clear from Figure 1, which sums up the frequency of occurrence of coordinated adjective premodifiers across the studied registers. (ibid.)

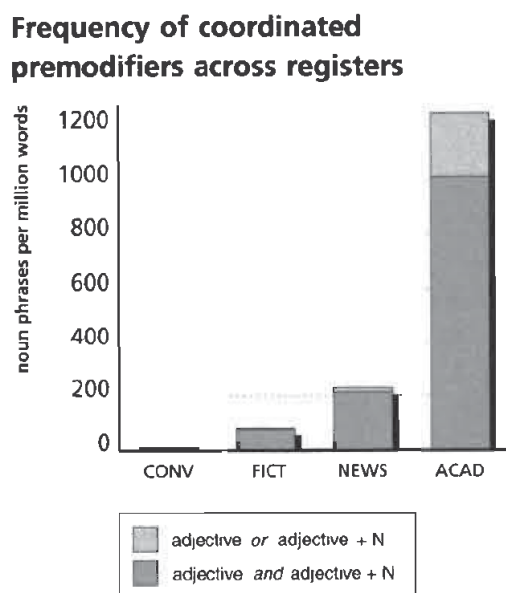


Figure 1: Frequency of coordinated premodifiers across registers (Biber et al., 1999: 601)

In general, premodifiers are more condensed and less explicit than postmodifiers. This will be discussed in the relevant subsection of this thesis.

#### 1.1.4. Postmodification

Postmodification can be realized by various forms as well. These can be finite and non-finite clauses or other non-clausal means specified below (with prepositional phrases constituting the “main type of non-clausal postmodification” (Biber et al., 1999: 604)).

The forms of postmodification comprise:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A special case are appositive noun phrases (e.g. *the rebels, the **Tigrayan’s People Liberation Front***). Some researchers consider them to be a subtype of postmodification (Biber et al., 1999: 638). In this paper, apposition is not included in this category and it is viewed as a kind of coordinative relationship: “It is more precise to talk about components of an appositional relationship expressing the same concept in a different way.” (Dušková et al., 2012: 13.6) [translation from Czech by the author]

- finite relative clauses, e.g. *a road **which disappeared in the forest** or the man **who had an accident***. (author's example)
- non-finite clauses - infinitival, e.g. *a trip **to** remember*; or participial, e.g. *government forces **advancing rapidly**, a bullet **fired from a gun*** (author's example)
- prepositional phrases, e.g. *a phone **with a couple of buttons on it*** (ibid.).
- adverbs, e.g. *This is the way **out***. (author's example)
- adjectives, e.g. *stars **visible*** (author's example)
- reflexive pronouns, e.g. *he **himself*** (author's example)

Finite and non-finite postmodifiers, “modifying constructions are perceived as equivalent, with a higher or lower degree of explicitness.” (Šaldová, 2005: 60) However, the difference between these two forms appear to be more significant, namely in the degree of formality: “in cases of syntactic variation the more explicit option is generally predicted to be more formal than its less explicit counterpart.” (ibid., 61)

Postmodifiers are used in two main functions – restrictive and non-restrictive.

Restrictive postmodification is used to identify “the particular ‘area’ being referred to” (Biber et al., 1999: 602). In addition to providing an identification of a particular ‘area’, they also provide some important characteristics. An example of restrictive postmodification is *The capital outlay may not be justified by the area **which may be expected to benefit by the improvement***. (ibid.)

On the other hand, non-restrictive postmodification does not identify the referent, but provides additional information, detachable from the governing element. The reference of the head noun with such postmodification has “either been previously identified or is

assumed to be already known” (ibid.), e.g. *He looked into the drawer, **which he rarely opened.*** (author’s example)

In writing, the non-restrictive postmodifiers are mostly separated from the head by a comma, although this rule is often not respected. On the other hand, restrictive modifiers are usually attached to the head without any punctuation. In spoken language pauses and intonation serve the same function as the comma. However, it is often very hard to distinguish which of the two functions is used in a particular case.

As for the frequency of usage of these two types, it appears that the “restrictive relative clauses are much more common than non-restrictive (without a comma) in all written registers” (ibid., 603).

### 1.2. Complexity and Reduced Explicitness of the Noun Phrase

It appears that a noun phrase is not restricted in its complexity. “Just as the sentence may be indefinitely complex, so may the noun phrase. This must be so, since sentences themselves can be reshaped so as to come within noun phrase structure.” (Quirk et al., 1985: 1238)

*CGEL* (ibid.) provides the following example to illustrate this complexity. It is a sentence with a subject in the form of a very complex noun phrase: ***The tall girl standing in the corner who became angry because you knocked over her glass after you waved to her when you entered** is Mary Smith.* This noun phrase is so condensed that it contains four sentences:

a) *The girl is tall.*

b) *The girl was standing in the corner.*

c) *You waved to the girl when you entered.*

d) *The girl became angry because you knocked over her glass.*

Another phenomenon associated with the complex and condensed structure of the noun phrase is the loss of explicitness. For the decoding of the meaning of a noun phrase, the outside context or previous knowledge is often necessary. Biber and Gray (2010: 12) provide the following examples (Table 3) to illustrate the different possible interpretations of the relations between the head noun and its premodification:

Head Noun and Premodifying Noun	Statement of Meaning
heart disease	a disease located in the heart
alcohol consumption	the process of consuming alcohol
computation time	the time required to compute something
prison officials	officials who work in a prison
union assets	assets that belong to a union

Table 3: Examples of possible interpretations of the relations within a NP.

As there is no grammatical cue to decode the particular meaning, it has to be deduced from the context or by means of previous knowledge. The condensation and economy of space is proportional to the loss of explicitness. Grammatically speaking, only rephrasing by means of a clause can express the intended meaning explicitly.

This phenomenon is observable even in noun phrases with multiple premodifiers. The use of multiple premodifiers efficiently packs dense information into “as few words as possible (when compared with the use of postmodifiers or separate clauses)” (Biber et al., 1999: 597). However, it “places a heavy burden on readers and listeners, since the logical relations among constituents must be inferred.” (ibid.) With multiple words in a

premodification, it is very unusual for all of its constituents to modify the head directly. “In a few cases, the meaning relations among constituents are truly ambiguous” (ibid.), cf. the two distinct interpretations of the noun phrase *two more practical principles*:

- [*two more*][*practical*] *principles* - two additional principles that are practical
- *two* [[*more*]*practical*] *principles* – two principles that are more practical (ibid., 598)

“The number of possible interpretations increases dramatically with each additional premodifier.” (ibid.) The constituents of a noun phrase therefore not only have complex relations with the head, but they often modify each other, thus creating a complex meaning structure.

A complex noun phrase can be therefore rephrased by a clause (or multiple clauses). Inversely, a sentence can be rephrased by a complex noun phrase. The condensation of a sentence into a noun phrase brings about a decrease in explicitness and an increase in economy of space.

Another means of increasing explicitness of a complex noun phrase is the usage of coordinated premodifiers. “[...] premodification can represent a large number of different structural/logical relations, with forms modifying other premodifiers instead of the head noun.” (Biber et al., 1999: 600) This can pose difficulties in decoding the meaning. “One way to reduce this indeterminacy, while retaining the dense packaging of information found with premodifiers, is to use coordinated premodifiers. This construction makes the logical relation among premodifiers explicit, with each one directly modifying the head noun.” (ibid., 600-601)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For examples of the coordinated premodification see section 1.1.3.

As for the postmodification, prepositional phrases are not only the most common type, but they are also the one that is the most condensed and least explicit, typically “characterizing non-human entities in relation to other non-human entities. They are more compact than clausal postmodifiers and commonly occur in sequences.” (ibid. 607) However, compared to premodifiers, they are still more explicit and less condensed.



## 2. General Characteristics of Written Academic Registers

The next two sections attempt to provide the basic descriptions of the written and spoken academic registers and to shed some light on whether, in the academic discourse, “the grammar of speech and writing is distinguishable both quantitatively and qualitatively.” (Aarts & Wallis, 2014)

This section concentrates on the basic features of written academic registers with limited comparison to other registers.

Some of the traditional views on academic language appear to be based on stereotypes: “The stereotypical view of professional academic writing is that it is grammatically complex, with elaborated relations expressed explicitly.” (Biber and Gray, 2010: 2). This suggests that the clausal structure should be, compared to other registers, very elaborate: “Researchers have claimed for decades that academic writing is more structurally elaborated than speech, shown by longer sentences, longer ‘t-units’ (a main clause plus all associated dependent clauses), and a greater use of subordinate clauses.”(ibid.)

However, the opposite seems to be true. Academic written language is a very complex one, but it is based on different means than clausal complexity: “in fact, subordinate clauses – especially finite dependent clauses – are much more common in conversation than academic writing. Instead, academic writing is structurally ‘compressed’ with phrasal (non-clausal) modifiers embedded in noun phrases.” (ibid.)

The stereotypes mentioned above are based on older times, as “academic writing has changed dramatically over the past century to prefer these less explicit linguistic features.” (ibid., 4)

A comparison with fiction provides an example of sharp contrast between clausal and phrasal complexity. Biber and Gray (2010: 6) provide the following sentence from Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1860; cited from Project Gutenberg: [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)):

- *As I saw him go, picking his way among the nettles, and among the brambles that bound the green mounds, he looked in my young eyes as if he were eluding the hands of the dead people, stretching up cautiously out of their graves, to get a twist upon his ankle and pull him in.*

The main clause of this sentence is relatively simple: *he looked in my young eyes*, “but it is modified by six different dependent clauses:” (Biber and Gray, 2010: 6)

Adverbial clauses:

- *as I saw him go*
- *picking his way among the nettles, and among the brambles .*
- *as if he were eluding the hands of the dead people*
- *to get a twist upon his ankle and pull him in*

Relative clauses:

- *the brambles that bound the green mounds*
- *the hands of the dead people, stretching up cautiously out of their graves*

The style of modern academic language is strikingly different at first sight. A sentence such as the example above would be very rare in this register. An example of the visibly different academic style would be the following sentence taken from a sociology textbook:

- *From the system perspective, these stages are marked by the appearance of new systemic mechanisms and corresponding levels of complexity. (ibid., 7)*

The condensation is obvious from the fact that there is only one verb (*are marked*) and no dependent clauses. However, there are four prepositional phrases:

- *from the system perspective*
- *by the appearance .*
- *of new systemic mechanisms and corresponding levels .*
- *of complexity*

The sentence also includes additional nouns and adjectives functioning as premodifiers of the head noun:

- *system perspective*
- *new systemic mechanisms*
- *corresponding levels*

Most sentences in academic prose “have optional phrasal modifiers, especially nominal premodifiers (adjectives or nouns) and nominal postmodifiers (e.g., prepositional phrases).” (ibid., 9) These modifiers “express classificatory meaning and often function as components of technical terms” (Dušková, 2009: 45), whereas in fiction they are less frequent and “convey descriptive or evaluative meaning.” (ibid.) In academic texts, “the higher representation of modified noun phrases [...] appears to be at least partly connected with the structure of technical terms, which are frequently two-word formations, with the modifier specifying the meaning of the head noun or designating a subcategory of the concept denoted by the head noun.” (ibid.)

This style of discourse appears to be present not only in professional research writing, but it is in fact “typical of all written academic texts that students encounter in a university education, including textbooks, departmental web pages, and even of course syllabi” (Biber and Gray, 2010: 9). Consider the following examples of different written academic registers, which all share the same features – lack of verbs and clauses with extended use of nouns and phrasal nominal modifiers. Head nouns are in bold, whereas phrasal modifiers are underlined (sample texts from Biber and Gray, 2010: 9-10):

Textbooks:

*This **patterning** of behavior by households on other households takes **time**. Each new **level** of system differentiation opens up **space** for further increases in complexity, that is, for additional functional **specifications** and a correspondingly more abstract **integration** of the ensuing subsystems.*

Department web page:

*Cultural and Social **Anthropology** deal with the many aspects of the social lives of people around the world, including our own society: their economic **systems**, legal **practices**, **kinship**, **religions**, medical **practices**, **folklore**, **arts** and political **systems**, as well as the **interrelationship** of these systems in environmental adaptation and social change.*

Course syllabus:

*The **purpose** of this course is to assist **educators** in developing an understanding and **appreciation** of information technology and a **vision** of the roles and impacts of these technologies on the curriculum, as well as to begin the **development** of expertise in planning and implementing informed **practices** which facilitate the **creation** of a computer using **curriculum** based on **models**, **theories**, and **research** relevant to effective educational **practices**.*

Needless to say, this reliance on condensation and nominalization by means of noun phrases and by means of prepositional phrases leads to a loss of explicitness and sometimes to ambiguity (as is established in the previous section).

However, this kind of academic language appears to be a relatively modern invention. “Corpus-based studies, which allow us to track these historical changes, have shown that the shift to the compressed, inexplicit style of discourse described above is largely a 20th century phenomenon.” (ibid., 15). Diachronic study of the case of noun as premodifiers in academic prose demonstrates this hypothesis quite clearly, as is visible in the following figure:

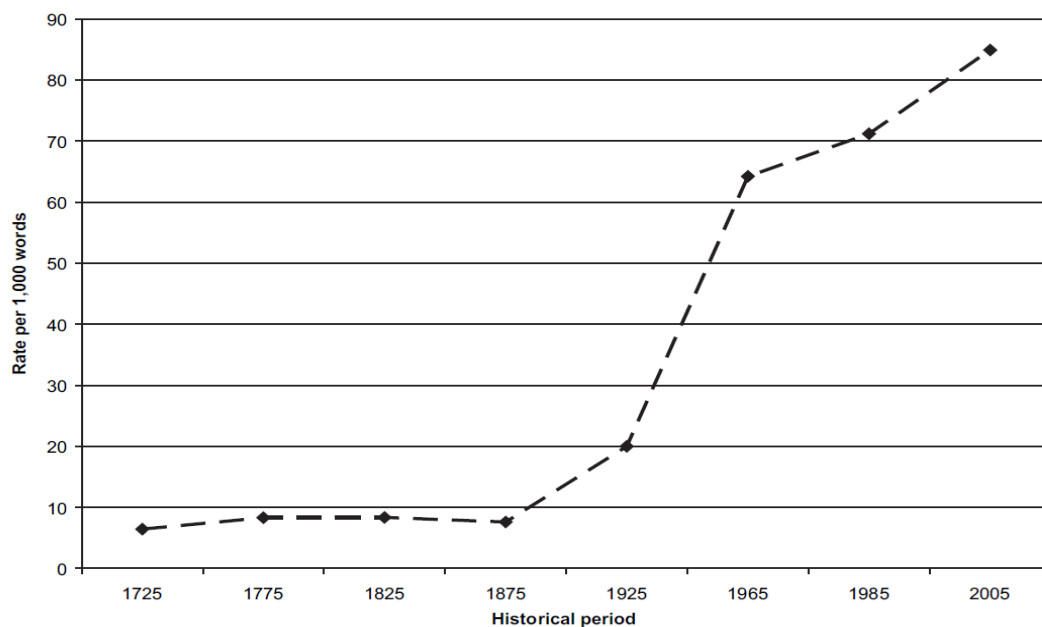


Figure 2: Historical change in the use of nouns as nominal pre-modifiers in academic prose. (Biber and Gray, 2010: 15)

The features mentioned above make academic writing “one of the most distinctive registers in English. In its grammatical characteristics, it is dramatically different from all spoken registers and most other written registers.” (ibid., 18) It makes the texts highly efficient for professionals who have some background knowledge in the field and who are

therefore able to quickly extract the important information. However, it is a skill that needs to be mastered and it is “difficult for novice students. This is because students lack the specialist knowledge that would allow them to readily infer the expected meaning of compact, inexplicit constructions.” (ibid., 19)

### 3. General Characteristics of the Language of Academic Lectures

Compared to written academic registers, the language of university lecture halls appear to be an entirely different matter. Until recently, very little had been known about this spoken academic register: “[...] to date it has not been possible to provide a thorough linguistic description of the language that students encountered in university setting since no corpora existed.” (Rippen, 2004: 65-66) Only the modern advances in spoken corpora have enabled researchers to study it in more detail.

Providing the characteristic features of spoken academic registers remains a difficult task, nevertheless some general observations can be made. However, many of these observations are contrary to intuitive expectations. “For example, it might be expected that academic lectures and textbooks on the same topic would be similar in their linguistic characteristics. However, it turns out that this is usually not the case.” (Biber, 2006: 2) It appears that the language of academic lectures contains many features associated with spoken registers, such as conversation.

Hyland (2009) analyses an excerpt from a psychological lecture:

*Darwin's not the only one who, notices that. lots of competing theorists are noticing the same thing, that in . . . that organisms seem to . . . match with . . . adapt to their environments. What Darwin does that's different, from the other theories of evolution, is propose that the mechanism by which that adaptation occurs and the mechanism that he proposes is natural selection. <PAUSE: 05> now I wanna spend a little bit of time talking about natural selection because, but f- first I'll just read this definition [...]* (Hyland, 2009: 100, abridged)

His analysis arrives at the following conclusions: “This extract [...] illustrates the colloquial character of much impromptu lecturing. We see, for example, the hesitations, false starts, fragments and repetitions typical of online production, as well as filled pauses, contractions (*gonna* and *wanna*), vagueness (*thing, a little bit*) and informal constructions (*what Darwin does is, one of the things that’s hard to get, these guys*) familiar from casual conversation.” (ibid.)

Furthermore, an important element of lectures is the interaction with the audience in real time. The study of an excerpt from a university lecture (Biber, 2006: 4) reveals some of these features, marking interaction with the students present in the lecture hall. These include features “that directly acknowledge and engage the audience, including questions (*did everybody get one of these?*), comprehension checks like *ok?*, and *you*.” (ibid.) The interactivity and usage of pronouns (especially second person pronoun *you*) is also dealt with in Adel (2012).

The lectures also include verbs of mental processes, which is a feature very different from written academic registers. The following conclusion relates to the excerpt mentioned in the previous paragraph:

“In contrast to the informational focus of textbooks, the instructor in this lecture describes his own attitudes and thought processes using mental verbs like *think* and *know*; stance adverbials like *really* and *a lot*; and modal and semi-modal verbs like *can* and *be going to*. In fact, the language produced is in some ways a direct reflection of the instructor’s thought processes.” (Biber, 2006: 4)



The differences between written and spoken academic registers are partially rooted in their discourse functions. While the main function of the language used in written academic texts is mainly to transmit a piece of knowledge or information as effectively as possible, the language of a lecture is used for different functions as well. The discourse functions of lecture language can be divided to multiple categories. One of the possible categorization is included in the following table, based on a research of a sample from the BASE corpus (Deroey & Taverniers, 2011: 5):

<b>Functions</b>	<b>Subfunctions</b>
Informing	Describing Recounting Reporting Interpreting Demonstrating
Elaborating	Exemplifying Reformulating
Evaluating	Indicating attitude Indicating degree of commitment
Organizing discourse	Orientating Structuring Relating
Interacting	Regulating interaction Involving the audience Establishing a relationship with the audience
Managing the class	Managing organizational matters Managing delivery Managing the audience

Table 4: Overview of lecture functions and subfunctions derived from the BASE sample (Deroey & Taverniers, 2011: 5)

Apart from providing the specific knowledge by means of informing, elaborating and organizing the discourse itself, it is clear that the language of lecture halls is used in part for evaluation, interaction and for the classroom management.

The spoken academic registers are “linguistically similar to face-to-face conversation” (Rippen, 2004: 79). Conversation, unlike written academic texts, does not rely so heavily on condensed noun phrases with complex modification, but rather on “extensive

clausal embedding”. (Biber and Gray, 2010: 6) “In particular, complement clauses (also called ‘nominal clauses’) are very common, especially that-clauses and WHclauses. Complement clauses normally fill a direct object slot, making it possible for a relatively short utterance to have multiple levels of embedding.” (ibid.) Overall, “there are around twice as many dependent clauses in conversation as in academic writing.” (ibid., 7) The sentence structure of conversation can therefore be very elaborate. “For example, the following relatively short sentence from conversation has four embedded complement clauses, each occurring as the object of the preceding main verb” (ibid.):

*But I don't think [we would want [to have it [sound like [it's coming from us] ] ] ].* (ibid.)

Even a relatively short utterance can contain multiple levels of embedding, such as:

*I just don't know [if that's [what he wants] ]* (ibid.)

However, although lectures do contain some characteristic features of conversation and other spoken registers, they contain specific stylistic features which constitute substantial differences in language usage.

First of all, even though a lecture is based in the immediate context and is to some degree interactive, a large part of the traditional university lecture takes the form of a monologue. “The large formal lecture is perhaps the prototypical genre of information transfer. Emphasizing transmission over negotiation and monologue rather than dialogue, it is seen by universities as the most practical and cost-effective way of imparting subject content *en masse* to growing intakes of undergraduate students.” (Hyland, 2009: 96-97) The traditional lecture is more concerned with “disseminating knowledge rather than constructing it.” (ibid., 96) Some forms of lecturing are a “one-way form of communication,

an institutionalized extended holding-of-the-floor that does not involve significant audience participation.” (ibid., 97).

Nevertheless, to say that a lecture is without interaction, with the audience remaining passive throughout the whole duration of the communication, would be a misconception. One of the factors influencing the degree of interaction is the size of the audience. For example, classroom lectures tend to be more interactive than lectures in big university halls. Small classroom lectures tend to be “not lexically dense or syntactically complex” (Rippen, 2004: 78), but they are still relatively challenging to follow, due to “the rapid interchange and the lack of structurally complete units” (ibid.), a feature common with conversation.

Perhaps the most important feature that distinguishes lectures from conversation and brings them closer to academic writing is the content of the communication and the information transmitted by the instruction: “by looking at the content of the lectures, it is easy to see that the information load of the lectures is much greater than normal face-to-face conversation.” (ibid.)

By definition, the aim of every university lecture is primarily to transmit knowledge: “spoken university registers, although linguistically similar to face-to-face conversation, differ greatly from the goals of most conversations. In most face-to-face conversation, presentation of self and interpersonal information are the most common goals. However, in the classroom setting, presentation of factual information is the goal. Even though the linguistic forms may be familiar, in that they are similar to those in conversation, the information that is being delivered in classroom lectures often involves the use of technical terms and the delivery of factual information.” (ibid., 79)

As a result of the mixture of factual content, transmission of knowledge and interpersonal interactions, the academic lecture appears to form a unique blend of features

typical of both written academic discourse and conversation. A prototypical academic lecture therefore contains both condensed inexplicit nominalized language as well as explicit situational language with embedded clausal structures.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Although it is out of the scope of this thesis, some aspects of the pedagogical application of the features of the academic language in relation to the notion of genre can be found in Swales (1990).

## 5. Material and Method

### 5.1. Analysed texts

The analysis is based on a comparison of two sets of three texts. The entire study material therefore consists of six texts. The first three texts represent transcripts of spoken academic lectures, whereas the other three represent written academic articles.

Firstly, the transcripts of spoken academic lectures were chosen and extracted from the BASE Corpus (British Spoken Academic English). This corpus:

consists of 160 lectures and 40 seminars recorded in a variety of departments (video-recorded at the University of Warwick and audio-recorded at the University of Reading). It contains 1,644,942 tokens in total (lectures and seminars). Holdings are distributed across four broad disciplinary groups, each represented by 40 lectures and 10 seminars. (BASE (British Academic Spoken English) and BASE Plus Collections, online. [cit. 2016-05-29])

The disciplinary group of the texts selected is humanities. The specific subjects of the texts are children's literature (tag *Child Lit S*), history of Roman Britain (tag *Rom Bri S*) and television drama (tag *TV Dramas S*). The transcripts were extracted in TXT format directly from the archive of the BASE corpus.

The written articles were then selected to match the chosen lecture transcripts as much as possible in order to reduce the differences between the two sets of texts to that in medium. The texts had to comply with the following criteria: firstly, they had to be published in British academic journals. Secondly, they had to be published during the last two decades (texts published before 1995 were excluded). Thirdly, their topics had to match those of the selected lectures, i.e. children's literature (Thompson & Sealey: 2007), history of Roman

Britain (Lane: 2013) and television dramas (Blake & Edwards: 2013). These texts are tagged respectively *Chil Lit S*, *Rom Bri S* and *TV Dramas S*. The last criterion was that the texts had to be written by British native speakers of English.<sup>5</sup>

## 5.2. Selection of Noun Phrases

In total, 210 noun phrases were selected for the analysis. 105 noun phrases are from lecture transcripts and 105 from the written academic articles (35 nouns phrases from each article).

In both types of texts, lecture transcripts and written articles alike, the introductory parts were skipped and the analysis starts in the first section of the texts that deals directly with the subject matter itself. The reason for this is that the introductory part of lectures is usually revision of previous lectures or organizational matters. Introduction of academic articles was also not considered to be representative of the text as a whole, because it usually summarizes recent research in the field and contains numerous references to other works and citations.

Direct quotations of other texts included in the articles were omitted as well.

The choice of the noun phrases to be analysed was based on the following criteria. Each sentence was analysed in terms of its clause elements and their realization forms:

- If a clause element of the main clause was realized by a noun phrase (typically a subject, object or complement), the noun phrase was included in the set to be analysed

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<sup>5</sup> The focus of this thesis is academic English as used by native speakers in British Universities. The publications by foreign academics lecturing in British universities were therefore excluded. For more information on academic English as used in an international university environment in Europe and elsewhere see Jenkins (2014), Alastrué & Pérez-Llantada (2015) and Dimova et al. (2015).

- If the realization form of a clause element of the main clause was a prepositional phrase comprising a preposition and a noun phrase complement of the preposition, the noun phrase was included in the set to be analysed;
- If the realization form of a clause element of the main clause was an adverbial or nominal (content or relative) dependent clause, its clause elements were further analysed in the same way as those of the main clause, with the relevant noun phrases extracted for analysis;
- Postmodifying adjectival relative clauses were considered modifiers within the noun phrases headed by their antecedent, and their structure was not further analysed.

The length of text necessary to extract the 35 noun phrases varied from sample to sample, however, on average, the extracts needed were longer in written articles in comparison to the samples of lecture transcripts. The exact numbers of words of the analysed samples are as follows (from the beginning of the first analysed noun phrase until the end of the last one):

Spoken:

- *Child Lit S*: 242 words
  - *Rom Bri S*: 171 words
  - *TV Dramas S*: 177 words
- Average:** 197 words

Written:

- *Child Lit W*: 472 words
  - *Rom Bri W*: 265 words
  - *TV Dramas W*: 342 words
- Average:** 360 words

### 5.3. Method of the Analysis

The material selected for the analysis was divided into two parts –the noun phrases from the written articles, and those from lecture transcripts. The noun phrases were numbered and tagged with the name of the article that they come from.

The noun phrases were then analysed with respect to eight criteria, and the results were recorded in a spreadsheet. From the 8 criteria, the first three were filled in for all of the phrases, whereas the last 5 were filled only if the given criteria were relevant for the particular noun phrase – otherwise they were left empty. The eight criteria comprise:

- **Type of noun phrase:**
  - simple noun phrase (no modification) (e.g. *the north*, Rom Bri W)
  - noun phrase with premodification (e.g. *last week*, Rom Bri S)
  - noun phrase with postmodification (e.g. *the image of the Head Teacher*, TV Dramas W)
  - noun phrase with both pre- and postmodification (*fictional representations of British schools and schooling*, TV Dramas W)
- **Syntactic function:** the syntactic function that the noun phrase represents in the clause structure, i.e. subject, object, subject complement, adverbial, object complement, complement of a preposition in various syntactic functions.
- **Number of words:** word count of the phrase
- **Premodification form:** e.g. adjectival phrase, noun phrase
- **Postmodification form:** e.g. prepositional phrase, relative clause
- **Multiple premod./postmod./head**
- **Number of embedded clauses:** both finite and non-finite



- **Pre- or postverbal position:** relevant only for noun phrases in adverbial function

#### 5.4. Problematic Issues

During the analysis, certain areas proved to be, to a certain level, problematic and choices had to be made to resolve these issues. This subsection provides a brief overview of these areas and the approaches that were chosen to deal with them.

The first issue is related determining the number of words in a noun phrase. For the purposes of this thesis, the working definition of a word is strictly formal. A *word* is considered to be a stretch of letters separated from the rest of the text by a space in the beginning and a space at the end. Hyphenated words were therefore counted as one word. As a result, the noun phrase *this power genre of the mid-nineteen-nineties* (TV Dramas S) is considered to consist of 6 words: *this*, *power*, *genre*, *of*, *the*, and *mid-nineteen-nineties*.

The second issue was the analysis of proper nouns. The issue was whether to analyse proper nouns consisting of multiple words as simple or complex noun phrases and how to approach these multiword expression. For the purposes of this thesis, all proper nouns are considered to constitute a separate class of noun phrases whose internal structure was not further analysed. Examples of proper nouns include *the Radio Times* (TV Dramas S), *Building 10* (Rom Bri W) or *To Stir with Love* (TV Dramas W). For these noun phrases, only the syntactic function and number of words were considered. The remaining criteria of the analysis were left empty.

The third issue were noun phrases with multiple coordinated heads. These may be analysed as several separate units (phrases) (Quirk et al., 1985: 953) or as a single noun phrase with a multiple head. As the purpose of this thesis is to study the complexity and

degree of condensation of academic registers, and as a coordinated multiple head itself can be considered to be a means of condensation, these cases are seen as one single phrase. For example, the nouns phrase *what similarities and differences* (Child Lit W) is analysed as a single unit (as opposed to *what similarities, [what] differences*).

The fourth issue were noun phrases with quantifiers as heads, such as *most of the buildings found at Wroxeter* (Rom Bri W). This example could be analysed in two ways. One of them would be to consider the noun *buildings* as the head and the rest of the phrase as dependent elements, with *most of* functioning as a quantifier. The second option is to follow the view of Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 349), who state that “quantification can also be expressed by means of a noun as head with an *of* PP as complement.” The head of the noun phrase provided is therefore *most* with *of the buildings found at Wroxeter* being a postmodification in form of a prepositional phrase. Other examples provided by Huddleston & Pullum (2002) include: *a lot of people* or *many of the delegates*. (ibid.) The issue is also illustrated in the following tree diagram depicting the analysis of the syntactic structure of the noun phrase *a number of protesters*, where the option a) illustrates the approach used in this thesis:

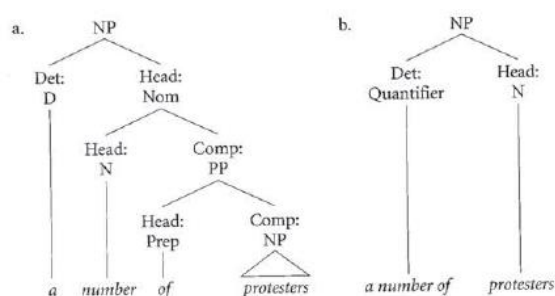


Figure 3: *Syntactic structure of NPs like a number of protesters* (ibid.)

## 6. Findings

Section 6 of this thesis discusses the results of the analysis. The discussion of each of the partial results in each section begins with the sample of written academic language, followed by the sample of the lecture transcripts. The two samples are then compared.

### 6.1. Types of Noun Phrases and Their Length

#### 6.1.1. Written Academic Articles

As mentioned above, four categories of the noun phrase (henceforth NP) will be distinguished in the present analysis: 1) a simple NP (i.e. a NP with no pre- or postmodification), 2) a NP with premodification, 3) a NP with postmodification and 4) a NP with both pre- and postmodification. Proper nouns were treated as further unanalysable NPs, constituting a separate category, which was delimited on the basis of meaning rather than internal structure. The individual types are exemplified in examples (1) a-e, respectively.

(1) a. *a case* (TV dramas W) – a simple NP

b. *their clause level analysis* (Child Lit W) – a NP with premodification

c. *the analysis of collocation* (Child Lit W) – a NP with postmodification

d. *two specific texts addressed to boys and girls* (Child Lit W) – a NP with pre- and postmodification

e. *Building 10* (Roman Britain W) – a proper noun

Table 5 sums up the number of instances and percentages of occurrence of the noun phrase types in the studied academic articles:

Type of noun phrase	Number of instances	Percentage of total
Both pre- & postmodification	25	23.8%
Postmodification	26	24.8%
Premodification	21	20.0%
Simple NP	28	26.7%
Proper nouns	5	4.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 5: Types of noun phrases in the written sample

As is clear from Table 1, almost one quarter (23.8%) of the noun phrases present in the sample are very complex – they are both pre- and postmodified. Furthermore, 24.8% contain a postmodification (without premodification) and one fifth of the sample are premodified (without postmodification). When the categories are combined, 48.6% of noun phrases in the written sample contain some form of postmodification and 43.8% contain some form of premodification. 28 out of 105 noun phrases studied in this sample are simple (without any modification) and 5 are proper nouns.

When the source articles of the noun phrases are taken into account, the results of the three academic articles are largely comparable as for the percentage of noun phrases with pre- and postmodification. The results for the percentage of premodified noun phrases are identical for all three cases. However, some discrepancies can be seen in the number of postmodified and simple noun phrases, as well as in the number of proper nouns. This can be caused by the differences in the authorial style and in the subject matter of the three articles.

The results can be compared in Figure 4. The values are given in percentages and they are assigned to the source texts (with the respective tags):

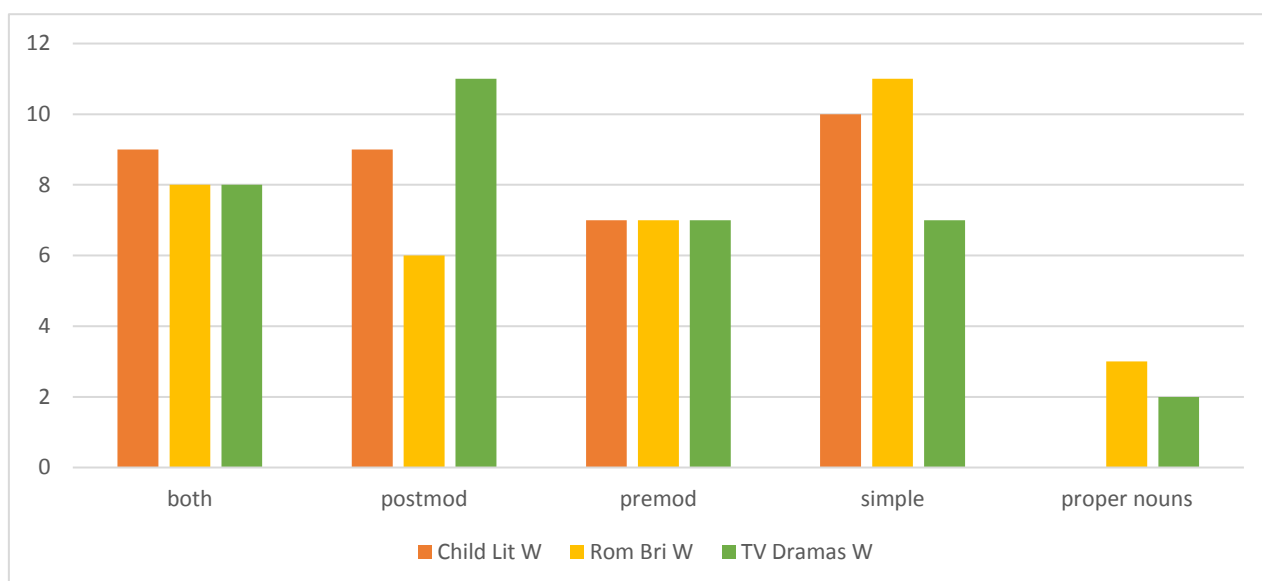


Figure 4: Differences in noun phrase types in the three source articles of the written sample (by number of instances).

### 6.1.2. Lecture Transcripts

For the spoken sample, the same categories of noun phrases were considered. Table 2 sums up the number of instances of the four types and proper nouns, and the percentage they represent of the total of 105 phrases analysed:

Type of noun phrase	Number of instances	Percentage of total
Both pre- & postmodification	6	5.7%
Postmodification	19	18.1%
Premodification	20	19.0%
Simple NP	57	54.3%
Proper nouns	3	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 6: Types of noun phrases in the lecture transcripts.

As the table shows, more than one half of the noun phrases in the sample of lecture transcripts are simple (54.3%). Only 6 instances (5.7%) have both pre- and postmodification, and noun phrases which comprise only premodification or only postmodification are both just short of one fifth of the cases (29.0% and 18.1% respectively). In total, 25 noun phrases are therefore postmodified (23.8%) and 26 are premodified (24.8%).

When the sources of the samples are taken into account, some discrepancies due to the subject matter and due to the authorial style of speech are visible. The simple noun phrases remain the dominant group in all three samples, however, the representation of the four categories varies, especially in the category of phrases with premodification only. All of the instances of proper nouns in the lecture transcripts come from one of the lectures only. It is therefore clear that the individual lecturing style of the speaker and the topic plays a certain role.

Figure 5 sums up the differences among the individual lectures. The values are given in number of instances and are assigned to the individual sources.

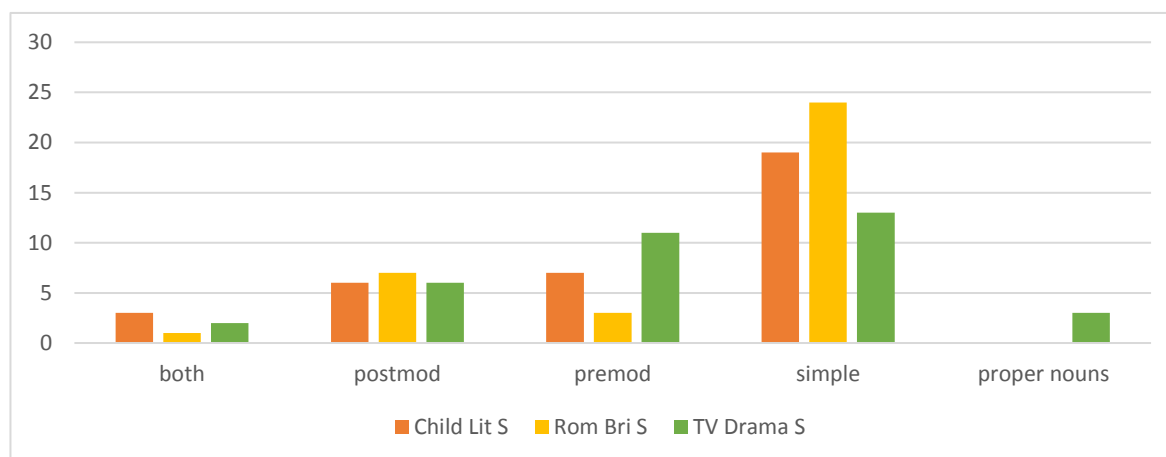


Figure 5: Differences in noun phrase types in the three source lectures of the transcripts sample<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Both = both premodification and postmodification; premod = premodification; postmod = postmodification; simple = simple noun phrase;

### 6.1.3. Comparison

The hypothesis of this paper is that the noun phrases in written academic registers have a more complex and compressed structure, relying on non-clausal modifications. The comparison of the two samples indeed shows that the percentage of complex noun phrases with both pre- and postmodification is almost 4 times higher in the written sample than in the lecture transcripts. As expected, the lectures also contain significantly more simple noun phrases than their written counterparts (that is almost twice as many).

The comparison of the two samples given in percentages is summed up in Figure 6:

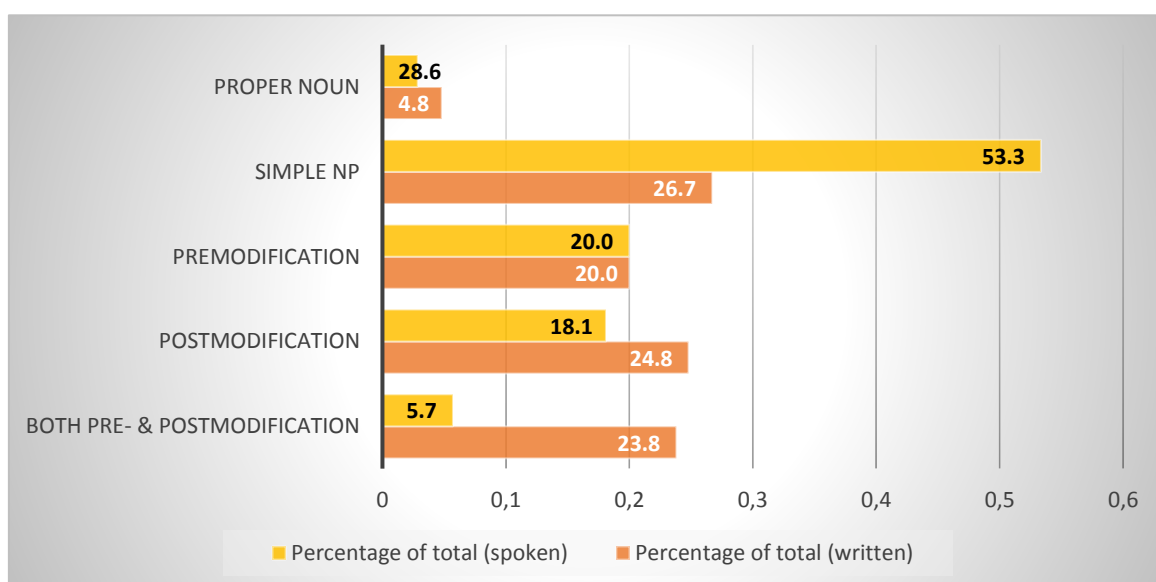


Figure 6: Comparison of NP types occurrence in the two samples.

However, the differences between the number of postmodified phrases is comparably less striking – the difference being 6.7%. Furthermore, the analysis of the premodified noun phrases shows no difference at all – the percentage in both cases being exactly the same at 20%. The occurrence of proper nouns is relatively low in both cases, with its usage in the written registers being 2% higher.

#### 6.1.4. Length of the Noun Phrases

A feature directly related to noun phrase type and complexity is its length. For the purposes of this thesis, the length of a noun phrase is expressed in the number of words that a particular noun phrase contains.

As for the extreme cases in the written samples, the extreme low is obviously one word, represented in 19 phrases. This number is lower than the 28 simple phrases and 5 proper nouns found in the written sample. This difference is due to the fact that some proper nouns, such as *To Sir with Love* (TV Dramas W), are in fact multi-word expressions and also due to the fact that each determiner (i.e. a pre-, post- or central determiner) was counted as a separate word. The simple phrase *the three corpora* (Child Lit W) therefore contains 3 words, the central determiner *the*, the postdeterminer *three* and the head *corpora*.

The extreme high in the written sample is a noun phrase containing 46 words, used in the article Child Lit W (example 2).

(2) *an extensive overview of the changing ways during the last two centuries in which adults have met the challenge of writing for children, and about children's concerns, while standing in relation neither to the world nor to their subject matter as the implied child reader does.* (Child Lit W)

The extreme high in Rom Bri W is 22 words (example 3).

(3) *A 'single huge platform of rubble hardcore' across the top of the former nave, north aisle and north portico of the basilica* (Rom Bri W)

In TV Dramas W, the extreme high is 21 words, represented by two noun phrases (examples 4 a,b):



(4) a. *the image of the teacher hero struggling to ‘civilise’ and inspire students in the ‘urban jungle’ of the inner-city secondary school.* (TV Dramas W)

b. *the instrument of their salvation overcoming the challenge of ‘problem’ students and ‘bad’ teachers to transform violent and low achieving schools* (TV Dramas W)

The average noun phrase lengths in the written samples and in the individual articles is summed up in Table 7:

Text	Average noun phrase length (number of words)
Whole sample	7.0
Child Lit W	8.6
Rom Bri W	5.3
TV Dramas W	7.1

Table 7: Average noun phrase lengths in the written sample

In the spoken sample, the extreme low is once again one word, represented by 48 instances (compared to 56 simple noun phrases and 3 proper nouns in the sample). The extreme high is 30 words (example 5):

- *one famous geneticist that I know of who got very very irritated with the kind of simplistic assumptions some other people make about the role of science in determining identity* (Child Lit S)

The extremes of Rom Bri S and TV Dramas S are 17 and 14 words, respectively (example 6 and 7):

- *the point of view of the reasons that he gives for the fifty-five and fifty-four invasions* (Rom Bri S)
- *three covers of the Radio Times that had references to medical dramas on it* (TV Dramas S)

The average lengths of the noun phrases in the lecture transcripts and in the individual lectures are summed up in Table 8:

<b>Text</b>	<b>Average noun phrase length</b>
Whole sample	3.6
Child Lit S	4.6
Rom Bri S	3.2
TV Dramas S	2.9

Table 8: Average noun phrase length in the lecture transcripts

As the hypothesis of this paper is that the noun phrase in written academic registers is generally more complex than that in the spoken lectures and that the simple phrases are less represented in the written than in the spoken sample, it is also presumed that the written noun phrase is longer on average as well. This is confirmed by the fact that the noun phrase in the written sample is on average almost twice as long as in the spoken sample. The analysis also shows that the noun phrases of the minimal length of one word are much more frequently represented in the lectures.

The extreme high is also longer in the written registers. This is not surprising, as the memory span of the speaker/hearer is more limited in speech than in the case of writer/reader in the written medium. However, this does not seem to be as significant in these samples as expected, because of the fact that the maximum of the lectures (30 words) is higher than the maximums of both TV Dramas W and Rom Bri W. It is therefore relatively safe to assume that the maximal length of a noun phrase is influenced by the individual style of the given author or lecturer.

## 6.2. Syntactic Function

### 6.2.1. Written Academic Articles

Let us now move to the analysis of the syntactic function of the studied noun phrases. In the sample of the written registers, the analysis identified 4 different categories: the subject (which includes the subcategory of the notional subject in existential and existential-locative clauses with a *there*-subject), object, subject complement and adverbial. Table 9 represents the distribution of these functions across the sample of 105 noun phrases. The table also distinguishes instances where the noun phrase is part of a prepositional phrase and the clause-element function of the respective prepositional phrase.

Syntactic function	Both pre- & postmodification	Postmod.	Premod.	Simple NP	Proper noun	Total	Percentage of total
Cs	2	1	0	0	1	4	3.8%
Object	5	10	8	3	0	26	24.8%
Pp-adverbial	8	6	6	7	0	27	25.7%
Pp-Cs	1	0	0	0	0	1	1.0%
Pp-object	1	1	2	0	0	4	3.8%
Subject	8	8	5	16	4	41	39.1%
<i>There</i> - subject	0	0		2	0	2	1.9%
Total	25	26	21	28	5	105	100%

Table 9: Distribution of syntactic functions across the written sample.<sup>7</sup>

As shown in Table 9, the dominant syntactic function of the noun phrase is the subject, which represents 39.1% of noun phrases in the written sample. The subject, however, differs from the other clause elements realized by noun phrases in the relative representation of simple noun phrases, which form 39% of all subjects. Somewhat surprisingly, there were eight noun phrases in the function of the subject which contained both pre- and postmodification. The modification, however, was usually relatively short,

<sup>7</sup> Cs = subject complement; pp-adverbial/pp-object/pp-Cs – noun phrase as a complement of a preposition in an adverbial, object or subject complement realized by a prepositional phrase; *there*-subject – notional subject in an existential *there*-construction.

with the overall length of the NP not exceeding eight words, e.g. *the three British television dramas discussed* (TV Dramas W). The same applies to subject noun phrases with postmodification, e.g. *the image of the Head Teacher* (TV Dramas W)

60.9% of NPs perform the functions of post-verbal clause elements, with the object (direct and prepositional) and the adverbial (realized by a prepositional phrase with a NP complement) constituting the most frequent functions. In both these functions the noun phrase typically displays some form of modification. Moreover, postmodification in the NPs with object function is typically long and complex, the average length of the object NP with postmodification being 15 words, e.g. *a history of drawing on contemporary social, political, or educational discourses to construct the representation of the inner-city school and the work of teachers* (TV Dramas W). NPs which function as a part of an adverbial prepositional phrase, on the other hand, tend towards a simpler structure - they are often simple NPs, and if they include modification, they still tend to be quite short (the average length is 6.3 words per phrase), e.g. *the actual drawings of the rubble* (Roman Britain W).

The differences between the three source articles appear to be relatively marginal (Table 10), with the exception of lower usage of the noun phrase in the function of the object in the text Rom Bri W, which is compensated for by its more frequent presence in the function of adverbial and subject.

Source	Cs	Object	Pp-adverbial	Pp-Cs	Pp-object	Subject	There - subject	Total
Child Lit W	0.0%	34.3%	22.9%	2.9%	0.00%	34.3%	5.7%	100.0%
Rom Bri W	5.7%	8.6%	31.4%	0.0%	8.6%	45.7%	0.0%	100.0%
TV Dramas W	5.7%	31.4%	22.9%	0.0%	2.9%	37.1%	0.0%	100.0%
<b>Whole sample</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>24.8%</b>	<b>25.7%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>39.1%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 10: Distribution of syntactic functions across the three source articles.<sup>8</sup>

There seems to be a correlation between the postverbal or preverbal position of the NPs and their complexity. The NPs in the postverbal position tend to be longer and more elaborate than those in the preverbal position. As a result, fewer simple noun phrases are found in postverbal position. This feature is discussed in more detail later in this section.

When we look at which types of noun phrases represent which syntactic functions (see Table 9), we discover that for subject, almost one half of the instances in total is realized by a simple noun phrase and 4 others are proper nouns. That takes up more than half of the NPs in the position of subject presented in this study. However, 21 remaining instances have some form of modification, which means that the simple noun phrase is not dominant in a large portion of the sample.

As for the object, significantly fewer noun phrases are simple (3 with no proper names). It therefore appears that the object in the written sample is usually modified.

The syntactic function of adverbials appears to be relatively evenly distributed among the different types of noun phrases, and the subject complement is realised by complex and postmodified types with one case of a proper noun.

Adverbials, it is interesting to note, that this syntactic function can be positioned either before or after the verb in the sentence structure. The position can have an effect on the complexity of the NP. Generally speaking, the structure of the adverbials in preverbal position is expected to be less complex than the structure of the adverbials in postverbal position. Generally speaking, the postverbal position is expected to be much more prevalent,

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<sup>8</sup> Cs = subject complement; pp-adverbial/pp-object/pp-Cs – noun phrase as a complement of a preposition in an adverbial, object or subject complement realized by a prepositional phrase; *there*-subject – subject in an existential *there*-construction.

with the preverbal position being of rare occurrence. This is indeed the case in the written sample, where all of the NPs in the adverbial function are postverbal. It is therefore impossible to determine the impact of the position relative to the verb on the complexity of the NP structure in this sample. A larger set of data would be required to get useful results in this area.

Prepositional phrases with noun phrase complements were attested in the function of the adverbial, prepositional object and, marginally, subject complement.

In studying whether the noun phrases form a part of a prepositional phrase or not, some differences arise between the individual categories as well. For example it appears that all of the noun phrases in adverbial function are part of a prepositional phrase (which cannot be considered to be unusual). The subject, which is also hardly surprising, is not expressed by a prepositional phrase in any of the cases. The object in our sample is mostly not part of a prepositional cases and the subject complement appears to be largely not included in a prepositional phrase.

#### 6.2.2. Lecture Transcripts

In the sample of the written transcripts, the analysis of the syntactic roles of the noun phrases identified 6 different categories. The categories comprise the subject (including the sub-category of there-subject), object, adverbial, subject complement, object complement and adjective complement.

Table 11 represents the distribution of these functions across the sample of 105 noun phrases. Similarly to the previous section, the figure also distinguishes instances where the noun phrase is part of a prepositional phrase and the clause element function of the prepositional phrases.

Syntactic function	Both pre- & postmodification	Postmod.	Premod.	Simple NP	Proper noun	Total	Percentage of total
Adverbial	0	0	2	2	0	4	3.8%
Co	0	0	1	0	0	1	1.0%
Cs	3	5	5	2	0	15	14.3%
Object	1	2	2	7	2	14	13.3%
Pp-adjective complement	0	0	1	0	0	1	1.0%
Pp-adverbial	0	2	4	6	0	12	11.4%
Pp-object	0	3	0	3	0	6	5.7%
Subject	2	3	5	36	1	47	44.8%
<i>There</i> -subject	0	4	1	0	0	5	4.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 11: Distribution of syntactic functions across the spoken sample.<sup>9</sup>

As is clear from Table 11, the dominant syntactic function by far is the function of subject with 44.8% of the noun phrases in the sample (47 instances). The category of notional subject in the *there*-construction (*there*-subject) takes up further 4.8% of the cases.

The frequencies of the next three most frequently used syntactic categories are much lower and all take up between one fifth and one seventh of the sample.

The first of these three categories is object with 13.3% of instances and further 5.7% of the instances of an object in form of a prepositional phrase. The syntactic function of object is therefore used in 19% of the cases. The second is adverbial with a combined percentage of 15.2%. The third is the subject complement with 14.3% of the cases.

The two remaining syntactic categories are relatively marginal and both are used in only one of the cases in total. These two categories are object complement and adjective complement.

<sup>9</sup> Co = object complement; Cs = subject complement; pp-adverbial/pp-object/pp-Cs/pp-adjective complement = noun phrase as a complement of a preposition in an adverbial, object, subject complement or adjective complement realized by a prepositional phrase; *there*-subject – subject in an existential *there*-construction.

A comparison of the three source articles reveals that the occurrence of the subject as the predominant syntactic function is almost the same in all of the three lectures and the differences in most of the remaining categories do not reveal any major discrepancies. However, the lecture Rom Bri S does show some deviation from the average of the sample as a whole. The usage of subject complement in this lecture is almost one third of the average, which appears to be compensated for by more frequent usage of noun phrases in the syntactic function of adverbial and object.

The distribution of the syntactic function across the source material of the samples is summed up in the table in Table 12:

Source	Adverbial	Co	Cs	Object	Pp-adjective complement	Pp-adverbial	Pp-object	Subject	There-subject	Total
Child Lit S	0.0%	0.0%	17.1%	11.4%	0.0%	8.6%	11.4%	45.7%	5.7%	100.0%
Rom Bri S	5.7%	0.0%	5.7%	20.0%	0.0%	17.1%	5.7%	42.9%	2.9%	100.0%
TV Drama S	5.7%	2.9%	20.0%	8.6%	2.9%	8.6%	0.0%	45.7%	5.7%	100.0%
<b>Whole sample</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>14.3%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>44.8%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 12: Distribution of syntactic functions across the three source lectures<sup>10</sup>

When we look at the distribution of the types of noun phrases across the syntactic function in the lecture transcripts, some interesting patterns emerge as well. The dominant function of subject is mostly expressed by a simple noun phrase. This is the case in 36 out of the 47 instances. One more instance is expressed by a proper noun. Only two subject noun phrases have both a pre- and a postmodification, three are postmodified and five are

<sup>10</sup> Co = object complement; Cs = subject complement; pp-adverbial/pp-object/pp-Cs/pp-adjective complement = noun phrase as a complement of a preposition in an adverbial, object, subject complement or adjective complement realized by a prepositional phrase; *there*-subject – subject in an existential *there*-construction.



premodified only. Five phrases in the subject function therefore have some form of premodification and seven of them have some form of postmodification.

The simple noun phrase is actually the preferred form in all syntactic functions except the subject complement and the notional subject of *there*-constructions. The subject complement tends to be expressed by noun phrases with pre- or postmodifiers, or complex NPs with both pre- and postmodification. The notional subject is most frequently realised by a noun phrase with a postmodifier. The notional subject of the *there*-construction and the subject complement are also the longest NPs, with 7.4 and 5 words on average, respectively. The subjects are generally much shorter; the average length of a subject is 2.2 words.

The second most frequent category is the object (comprising both the direct and prepositional object). The noun phrases in this function are predominantly simple as well. Twelve out of twenty noun phrases in this function are simple (two of which are proper nouns). Only one of the noun phrases in this function is modified in a complex way with both pre- and postmodification. Five of the phrases have only a premodification and two have only a postmodification. Six of the noun phrases therefore contain some form of a premodification and three some form of postmodification.

As for the adverbials (both with and without prepositions), none of the noun phrases are modified in a complex way. Half of the noun phrases (eight out of fifteen instances) are simple (not surprisingly none of these are proper names). Six of them are premodified (by one-word adjective or noun phrases) and only two of them are postmodified by prepositional phrases.

In the syntactic function of adverbials, it is possible to study the effect of their position relative to the verb on their complexity (similarly to the previous section). Out of the fifteen adverbials in the spoken sample, six are positioned before the verb in the sentence

and nine are positioned after the verb. In theory, the postverbal adverbials are expected to be more complex in structure than the preverbal ones. As for the NP length (number of words), the results are the following:

- The average length of the adverbial NPs in the preverbal position in the spoken sample is 4.3 words (higher than the average of the whole sample, which is 3.6 words) However, this value is influenced by one particularly long NP, of 16 words, without which the average would drop to 2.0 words (example 8):

(8) [From] *the point of view of the reasons that he gives for the fifty-five and fifty-four invasions* [I hope that the main message came across that...] (Rom Bri S).

- The average length of the adverbial in the postverbal position is 3.9 words. Interestingly, this value is lower than the preverbal value. A larger set of data would be required to confirm this result.

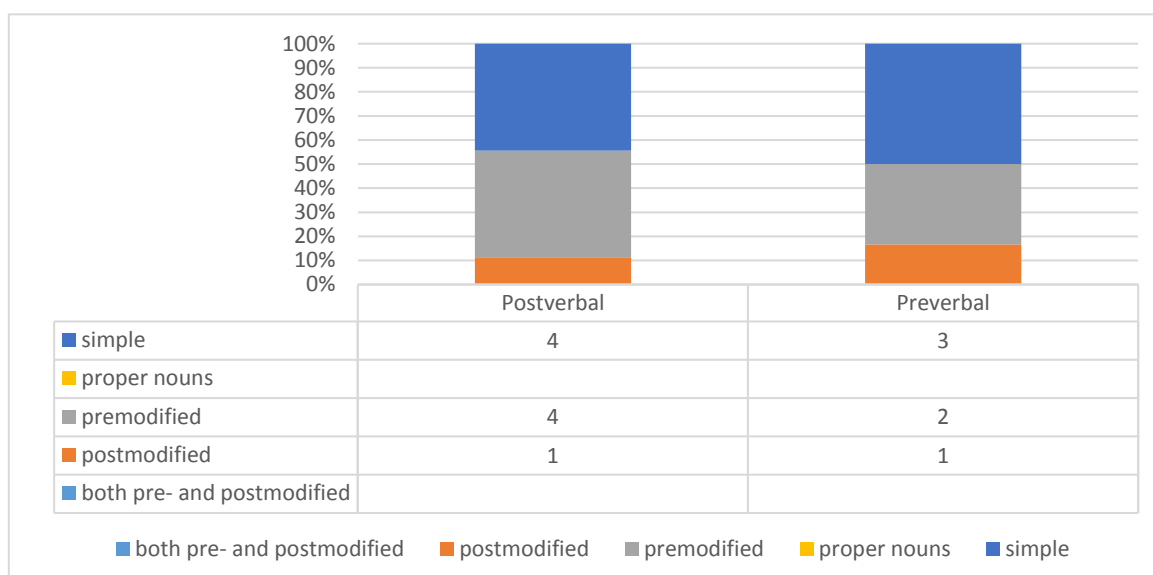


Figure 7: NP types in the adverbial function according to their position in the sentence.

When we consider the NP type in relation to the positioning of the adverbials, the results do not confirm the hypothesis that the postverbal position should contain more complex NP types. The distribution of the NP types in the two positions of the adverbial are in fact very similar, with no important difference. The simple NPs are slightly more represented in the preverbal position, but difference is lower than expected.

The rare cases of object complement and adjective complements (one instance of each) are both with premodification only.

If we look at whether the individual categories are expressed by a noun phrase included in a prepositional phrase, some differences among the different syntactic functions arise as well. Not surprisingly, out of the major categories, the syntactic function that is realized by a prepositional phrase the most often is adverbial (twelve out of sixteen cases). Object is mostly without the prepositional phrase realization (six out of twenty cases are part of a prepositional phrase). The subject complement is also exclusively realized by noun phrases not included in a prepositional phrase.

### 6.2.3. Comparison

Let us now proceed to the comparison of the analysis results of the two sets of samples.

Firstly, the comparison concentrates on the differences among the distributions of syntactic functions across the samples. Figure 8 sums up the data to be compared.

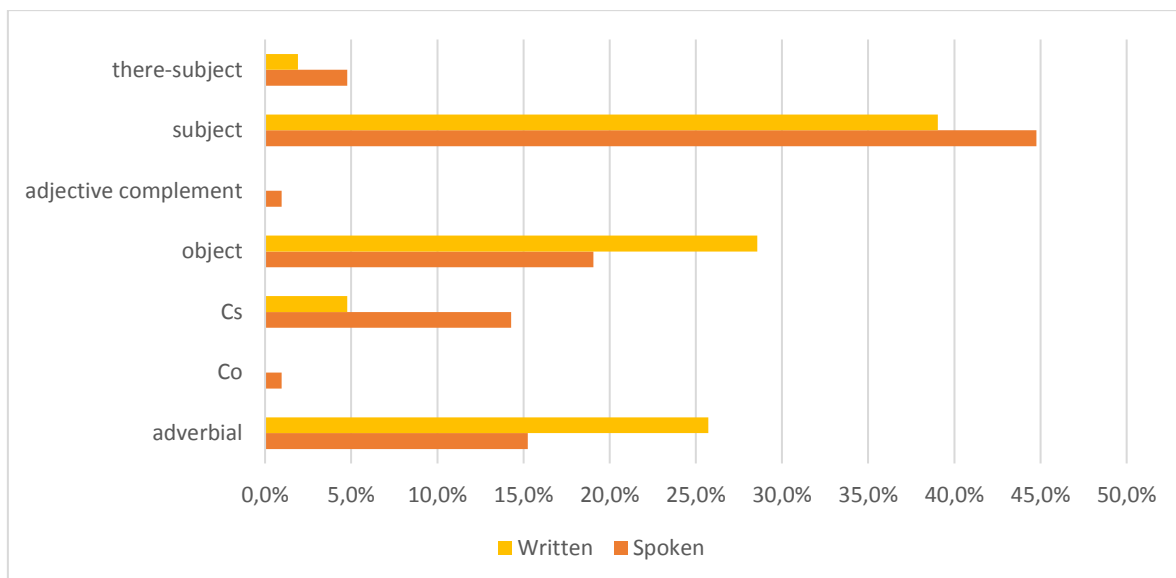


Figure 8: Comparison of distributions of syntactic functions of NPs in the two samples.<sup>11</sup>

The dominance of subject in the lectures is not surprising, because the spoken language tends to use shorter sentences and a given sample is therefore more likely to contain a larger number of subjects (when compared to longer sentences in the written sample, where the subject appears less frequently). Although this appears to be true and the category of subject is more prevalent in the lecture transcripts with almost 50% of the cases, the difference from the written sample is not as substantial as was previously expected – the gap is 8.5%, which is 9 instances.

An important difference in the subject category arises when we look at the noun phrase type. As the tables in Figures 13 and 15 show, the noun phrases in the position of subject are more often simple in the spoken sample. Here, the simple phrases make up 36 out of 52 instances (69.2%). In the written sample, the subject is realized by a simple noun phrase only in eighteen out of 43 instances (41.9%).

<sup>11</sup> Cs = subject complement; Co = object complement

Interestingly enough, in the spoken sample, out of 37 simple NPs in the subject function, 32 are headed by a pronoun. Sixteen of these pronouns are demonstrative pronouns or personal pronouns of the first and second person. In the written sample, eight out of sixteen simple NPs in the subject function are headed by a pronoun. This is due to the fact that spoken registers rely more on the immediate context than their written counterparts. The distribution of NP types in the subject function is summed up in Figure 9:

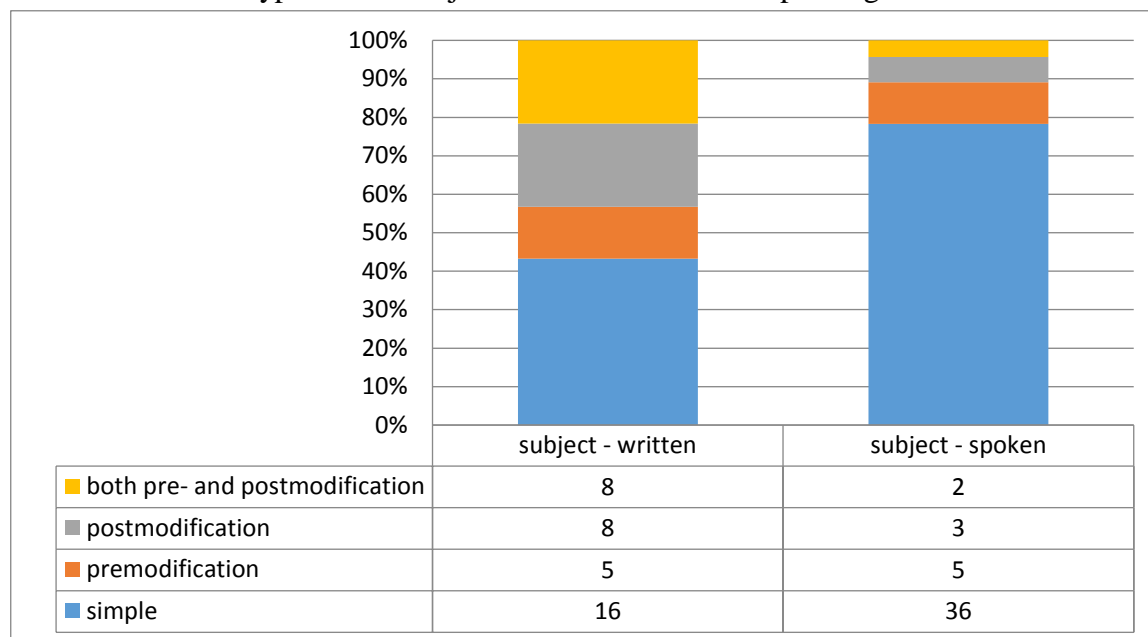


Figure 9: Noun phrase types in the subject function in the two samples

The rare instances of adjective complement and object complement (1 instance each) do not appear in the written section. However, a larger set of data would be necessary to draw any conclusions from this comparison.

The difference is more significant in the case of subject complement. It appears in 14.3% of the cases in the spoken sample, but only in 4.8% of the cases in the written sample, which is a difference of almost two thirds. This suggest that the spoken register is more inclined to use copular verbs. The phrase type analysis in this category also reveals that only 2 noun phrases out of 15 in this syntactic function in the spoken sample are expressed by a simple noun phrase. This is unusual, as the simple phrases have a larger representation in

the other syntactic categories. This could be explained by the fact that subject complements are postverbal and therefore more complex (however, this hypothesis does not apply to the object).

What the written sample lacks in the category of subject complement is compensated for in the syntactic functions of adverbial and object – both of which are represented more in the written than in the spoken sample.

To begin with the object, Figure 10 sums up the distribution of noun phrase types in the object function across the two samples:

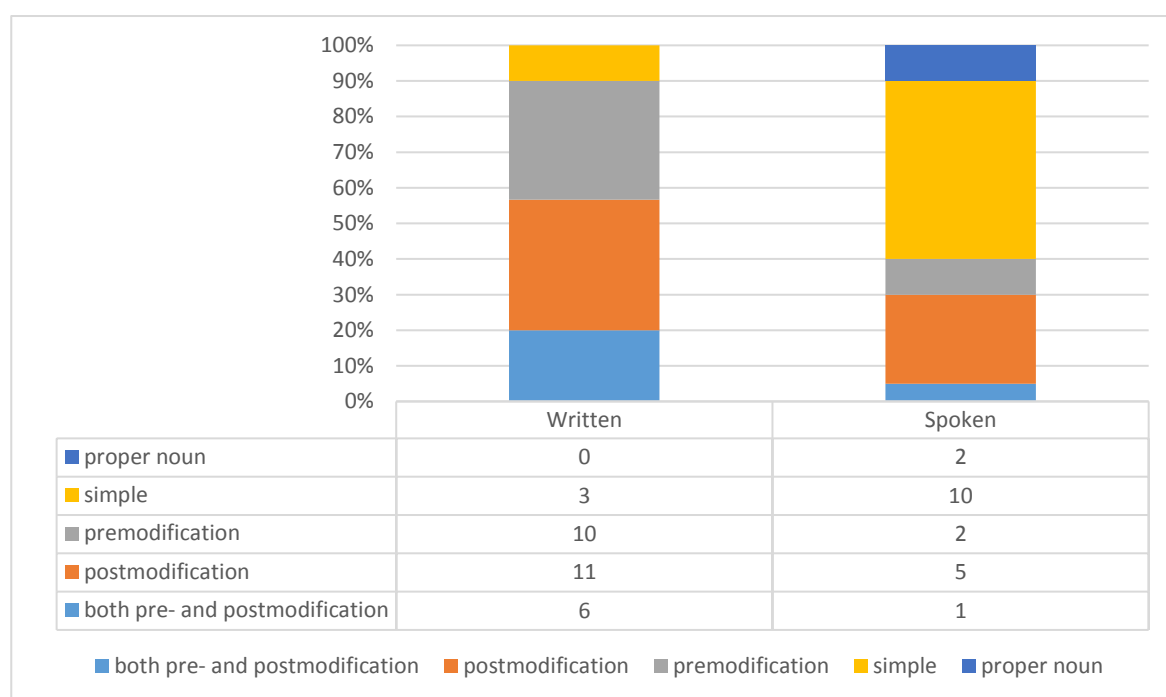


Figure 10: Noun phrase types in the object function in the two samples.

It is clear from Figure 10 that in the object function, the simple NP is once again much more prevalent in the spoken lectures than in the written articles. All the other forms of noun phrases are used more frequently in the written registers, with the exception of proper nouns, which were not used in this syntactic position in the written sample at all. In the case of postmodification, the difference is, however, smaller than in the other types of NPs.

As the object is in postverbal position, it was expected to have a complex structure with frequent occurrence of modified NPs. This is not the case in the spoken sample at all, where the simple NPs is prevalent.

As for the adverbial, the distribution of NP types is once again more inclined towards the complex types in the written sample, where eight out of 27 cases have both pre- and postmodification, six have premodification only, six postmodification only and seven are simple. In the spoken sample, none of the NPs have both pre- and postmodification, two are postmodified only, six are premodified only and eight are simple (sixteen occurrences in total).

The sections dealing with the analysis of individual sections concluded that the written section does not contain any instances of preverbal adverbials, which is in accordance with the hypothesis that preverbal adverbials are rarer than postverbal ones. However, in the spoken sample, six out of sixteen instances of NPs in the adverbial function were in preverbal position. This seems to be a major difference between the two samples and a surprising result. Their complexity is also more elaborate than the expectations (see the analysis in the previous section). Other observations include the fact that, in postverbal position, the adverbial is realized by a prepositional phrase more often than in preverbal position. Also, the postverbal adverbials follow the general tendency for postverbal clause elements to be slightly longer than preverbal ones, although one of the preverbal adverbials is the longest adverbial in the sample (17 words due to complex postmodification).

In the analysis of the frequency of NPs in the function of prepositional complements within a prepositional phrase, the results show that NPs are more likely to occur within a prepositional phrase in the written sample (33 out of 105 instances) when compared to the

spoken sample (16 out of 105 instances). The distribution of the NPs within prepositional phrases between the syntactic functions in the two sample is summed up in Figure 11:

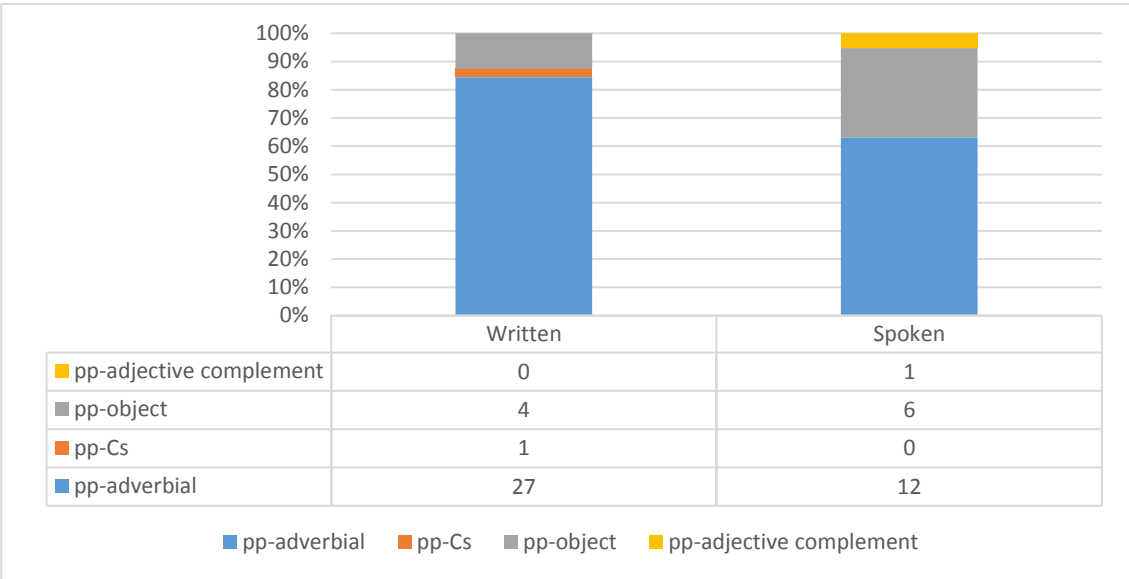


Figure 11: Distribution of NPs within prepositional phrases between the syntactic functions in which they occur.<sup>12</sup>

### 6.3. Postmodification

After the analysis of the types of the NPs in the two samples, their lengths and their syntactic functions, the hypothesis that NPs in written academic articles are longer and more complexly modified are confirmed (although in some cases the difference was less important than expected). Another important difference between the written and spoken academic registers presupposed by the hypothesis of this paper is that NPs in the academic articles are more likely to be postmodified by a prepositional phrase or some other non-clausal means, whereas the noun phrases in the lectures should frequently rely on clausal postmodification. The analysis of this section concentrates on the types of postmodification in the two samples.

<sup>12</sup> pp = NP functioning as a complement of a preposition within a prepositional phrase



The analysis also studies whether the postmodifications contain any embedded clauses and whether the postmodification is multiple.

### 6.3.1. Written Academic Articles

Total number of postmodified NPs in the written sample is 51 instances (includes phrases with post pre- and postmodification). The distinguished forms of postmodification were prepositional phrase, finite clause, non-finite clause and adverbial phrase. Table 13 sums up the findings (NPs with more than one postmodification are included in more than one category, the sum is therefore higher than 51):

Postmodification form	No. of instances	% of total
Prepositional phrase	41	75.9%
Finite clause	4	7.4%
Non-finite clause	8	14.8%
Adverbial phrase	1	1.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 13: Postmodification forms in the written sample

It is clear that the hypothesis of NPs in the written sample being postmodified mostly by non-clausal elements was confirmed – more than four fifths of postmodified NPs were modified by a prepositional phrase. Clausal means were used in only twelve instances and a postmodification by an adverbial phrase is represented only very marginally.

The dominance of the prepositional phrase is self-evident and requires no further commentary or subdivision. However, the clausal postmodification can be further divided into subtypes. The finite clausal postmodifications contains three instances of a relative clause (example 9) and one instances of a nominal content clause (example 10). The non-finite postmodifications include five instances of *ed*-participial clauses (example 11), one

instance of an infinitival clause (example 12) and two instances of an *ing*-participial clause example 13). One example for each of these categories is provided here:

- (9) *a key factor that helped in its recognition* (Rom Bri W)
- (10) *the claim that they constitute a recognisable 'school' genre* (TV Dramas W)
- (11) *the three British television dramas discussed* (TV Dramas W)
- (12) *the first more specific question to be derived from this one* (Child Lit W)
- (13) *the general question underpinning the investigation reported here* (Child Lit W)

The adverbial phrase is used only once as a modifier of a de-verbal noun, and it co-occurs with a prepositional phrase (example 14).

- (14) *the piecing **together** of three large plans* (Rom Bri W)

When analysing the multiplicity of the postmodification, 12 instances were classified as having multiple postmodification. These instances include two kinds of forms illustrated by examples 15 and 16:

- (15) *representations of schools and schooling* (TV Dramas W)
- (16) *the outline of the structure lifted from the interpretation plans* (Rom Bri W)

Example 15 is treated as one coordinated prepositional phrase, whereas example 16 comprises two separate forms (a prepositional phrase and an *ed*-relative clause) postmodifying the head of the NP. Both of these cases are classified as a multiple postmodification.

### 6.3.2. Lecture transcripts

In the lecture transcripts, 25 out of 105 instances contain some form of postmodification (this number comprises phrases with only postmodification and with both pre- and postmodification). The distinguished forms of postmodification in this sample were prepositional phrase, finite clause and adjectival phrase. Non-finite clause and adverbial phrase were not identified at all. Table 14 sums up the findings (phrases with more than one postmodification were included in more than one category, the total number is therefore higher than 25):

Postmodification form	No. of instances	% of total
Prepositional phrase	18	69.2%
Finite clause	7	26.9%
Adjectival phrase	1	3.8%
Total number of phrases	26	100%

Table 14: Postmodification forms in the spoken sample

Although the finite clause is the means of postmodification in more than one fourth of the instances, the predominant form is still postmodification by a prepositional phrase. This result is contrary to the hypothesis that the clause is the most frequently used form of postmodification in the spoken academic lectures. Non-finite clauses does not figure in this table at all. The finite clause category subsumes two content clauses and five relative clauses.

As for the postmodifications that are multiple, there are four instances of this phenomenon (the criteria are the same as in the previous section).

### 6.3.3. Comparison

In the first sample (written), the results were largely as expected – predominance of prepositional phrases with a higher percentage of non-finite forms when compared to the

finite clauses. In the second sample, the results are contrary to the expectations – the prepositional phrases are still dominant and the difference between the two samples in this aspect is not as large as expected.

The most significant difference between the two samples is the total absence of non-finite clausal means of postmodification in the spoken sample. This might be explained by the fact that non-finite forms are a means of compression of information, which is in theory more common for written registers, as opposed to spoken ones, where more explicit forms are expected to be used more frequently. Figure 12 sums up the distribution of forms of postmodification in the two samples. The predominance of prepositional phrases is clear in both samples.

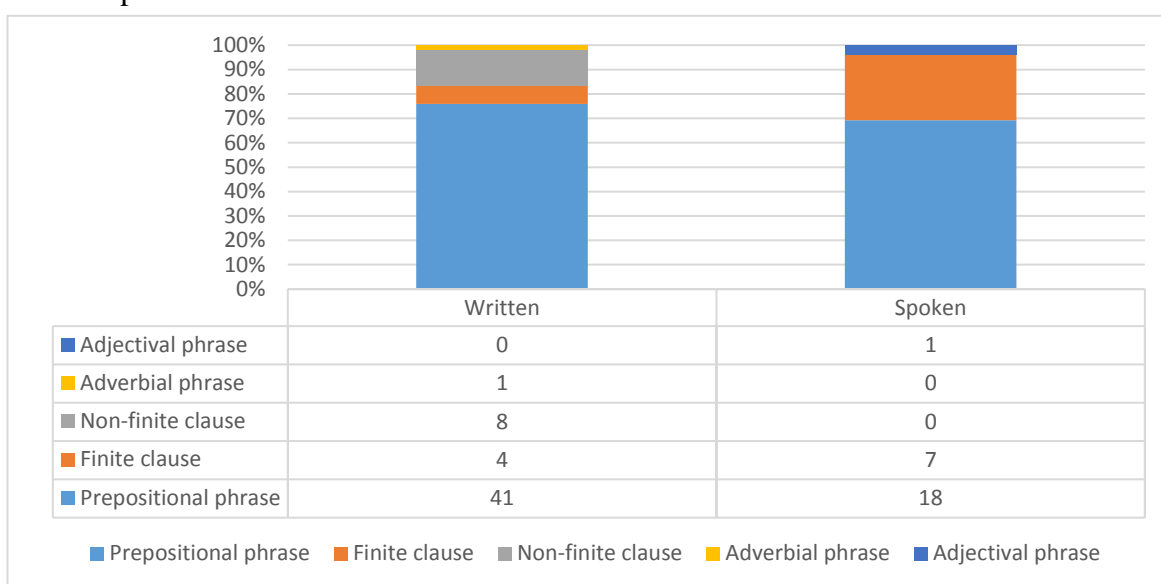


Figure 12: Distribution of postmodification forms in the two samples.

Multiple postmodification is a sign of compression and NP complexity as well, so a comparison of the results of the two samples proves to be useful. In the written samples, almost one quarter of postmodified NPs contain a multiple postmodification (23.5%). In the spoken sample, the percentage is lower at 16%.

An interesting point of comparison is the number of postmodifications with embedded clauses. The expectations as for the result could lean both ways – the written NPs are considered to be more complex, but the NPs in the spoken sample are expected to use the clausal means of postmodification more prominently. As it turned out, when the embedded clauses (both finite and non-finite) were counted, the written sample contained seventeen cases of postmodification with one or more embedded clauses (the average number of clauses being 1.5), whereas the spoken sample contained only eight cases (the average number of clauses being 1.5 as well). The average number of embedded clauses was calculated as the sum of all of the embedded clauses in the samples divided by the number of phrases containing one or more embedded clause. The complexity of embedding therefore appears to be same in both samples, but this means is used more frequently in the written one.

#### 6.4. Premodification

The last criterion studied in this paper is premodification, its form and its complexity. Once again, the written sample was expected to be more complex (that is with multiple premodification being used more frequently) with more nouns being used as premodifiers. The spoken sample was expected to use less complex premodifications with adjectives being used more frequently. Let us begin with the written sample.

##### 6.4.1. Written academic articles

The analysis of premodification in the written samples distinguished three forms of premodification – adjectival phrase, noun phrase and *ed*-participle. Out of 105 sample NPs, 46 were premodified. The results are summed up in Table 15. The NPs with more than one

premodification were subsumed under multiple categories, the total number is therefore higher than 46.

Premodification form	No. of instances	% of total
Adjectival phrase	34	68.0%
Noun phrase	14	28.0%
<i>ed</i> -participle	2	4.0%
<b>Total number of premodified NPs</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 15: Premodification forms in the written sample.

It is clear from Table 10 that the dominant form of premodification in the written sample by far is the adjectival phrase with almost three quarters of all the instances. Premodification by a NP represents almost one third of all the cases, with the participial form being represented marginally. The predominance of adjectival phrases as premodifiers is not surprising, however, the NP was expected to be represented in a larger portion of cases.

As for the multiple premodifiers, six NPs have this complex form of premodification, which represents almost 13% of premodified NPs. An example is illustrated in (17):

- (17) *cinematic and previous television portrayals* (TV Dramas W)

#### 6.4.2. Lecture transcripts

Overall, there are 26 instances of NPs in the lecture transcripts which contain some form of premodification. The forms identified in this part of the analysis were only adjectival phrase and noun phrase. The findings are summed up in Table 16. Once again, the NPs with multiple premodification consisting of multiple forms were included in both categories, the total number is therefore higher than 26.

Premodification form	No. of instances	% of total
Adjectival phrase	23	85.2%
Noun phrase	4	14.8%
Total number of premodified NPs	27	100.0%

Table 16: Premodification forms in the spoken sample.

As is clear from Table 11, the dominant form by far is the adjectival phrase with almost nine tenths of the premodified NPs in the sample. The only other category, the noun phrase, is represented by four instances, one of which is a multiple premodification also containing an adjectival phrase (18):

- *a different power genre* (TV Dramas S)

There were only two instances of multiple premodification, i.e. 7.7% of all the instances of premodification.

#### 6.4.3. Comparison

One of the most important differences between the results of the analysis of the samples is the percentage of NPs premodified by a NP. This number is, as expected, higher in the written sample, with proportionally almost twice as many cases as in the spoken sample. Related to this result is the fact that the spoken sample uses premodification in the form of an adjectival phrase more often than the written one by almost 15%.

The diversity of the attested form of premodification is also higher in the written sample, where apart from the two forms mentioned above, the *ed*-participle is represented as well, although marginally. The comparison of the results in a graphic form is provided in Figure 13:

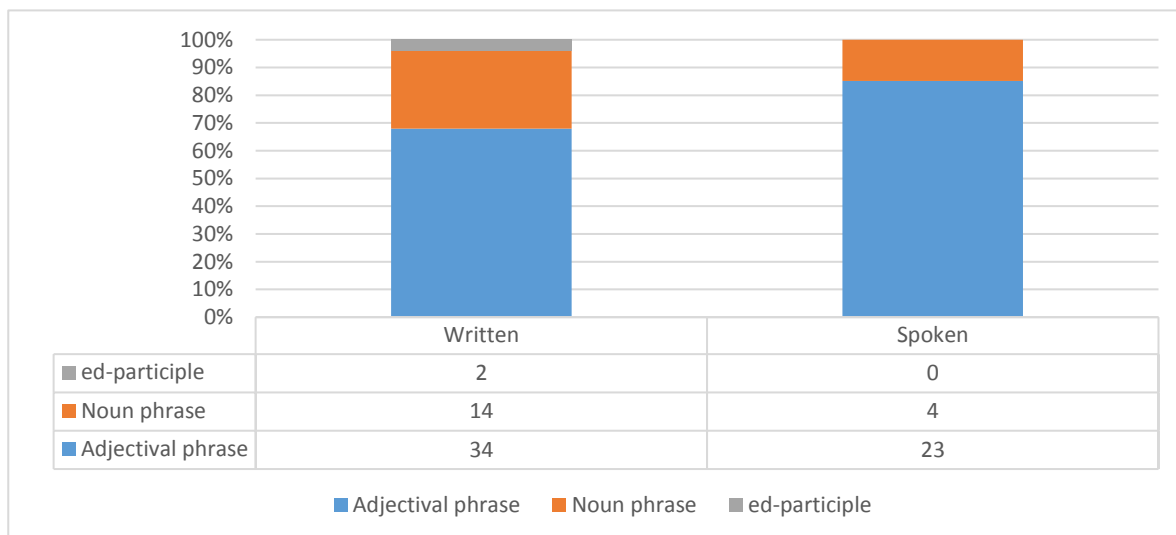


Figure 13: Distribution of premodification forms in the two samples.

The difference between the two samples are clearly visible in this figure, however, the difference is not as striking as expected.

The third difference is the number of NPs with multiple premodification. As the NPs were expected to be more complex in the written sample, it comes as no surprise that it is indeed the academic articles where the multiple premodification is represented more often. Despite this fact, multiple premodification remains a phenomenon which occurs in a small minority of cases in both of the samples.



## 7. Summary and Conclusion

To sum up, the present thesis set out to explore the differences between the noun phrases in written and spoken academic monologue, focussing on the length of the phrase, its internal complexity and syntactic functions. The hypotheses concerning these factors will be presented one by one below with the results of the analysis confirming or refuting the initial assumptions. The individual subsections of the practical part of this thesis verified the elements of this hypothesis one by one.

Firstly, the assumption that the written sample would contain more noun phrases with complex structure (including both pre- and postmodification) than the spoken sample was confirmed. The spoken sample also contained a higher number of simple noun phrases. However, the numbers of phrases with a premodification or a postmodification only showed no substantial difference between the two samples.

Secondly, as expected, the phrases in the written sample were longer, containing more words on average than those in the spoken sample.

Thirdly, the assumption that the syntactic functions of the noun phrases would be very similar in the two samples was not confirmed, as the spoken samples contained noun phrases in the subject function more frequently, whereas the written sample contained more phrases in the function of object and adverbial. In the lectures, 14.3% of noun phrases functioned as the subject complement, a marginal function in the written articles (3.8%). The existential *there*-constructions with NPs as notional subjects were also attested more frequently in the spoken sample.

Fourthly, the assumption that the postmodification form in the spoken sample would rely heavily on clausal means, whereas the written one would rely on prepositional phrases

was only partially confirmed. Although the spoken sample contained more clausal postmodification, the predominant form in both samples was prepositional phrases.

Fifthly, similarly to the previous point, the hypothesis that the premodification form would be mostly noun phrase in the written samples and adjectival phrase in the spoken sample was confirmed only partially as well. The noun phrase was indeed more prominent in the written sample, however, the most frequently used form in both samples was the adjectival phrase.

As is visible from summary stated above, a substantial part of the original hypothesis was confirmed by the analysis. Despite this fact, some parts of it were disproved. The noun phrase in the written text is indeed more complex and longer than in the spoken lectures, however, the degree of these differences is often not as substantial as was originally assumed.

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#### TV DRAMAS W:

BLAKE, A., & EDWARDS, G. (2013). From Hope & Glory to Waterloo Road : mediating discourses of 'crises' surrounding schools and schooling in British television drama, 1999–2011. *Discourse: Studies In The Cultural Politics Of Education*, 34(5), 784-798.

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Corpus BASE Collection (Arts and Humanities) available at:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/collections/base/lecturetranscripts/ah>

(accessed 28.7.2016)

### Names of the lecture transcripts files:

#### CHILD LIT S:

*Children's literature* (English) [ahlct009.txt]

#### ROM BRI S:

*Roman Britain* (Classics) [ahlct006.txt]

#### TV DRAMAS S:

*Medical dramas on TV* (Film and Television Studies) [ahlct013.txt]

## Resumé

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá substantivní frází v britské akademické angličtině a to jak v její psané, tak i mluvené podobě. Psanou podobu akademické angličtiny pro účely této práce představují odborné publikované články, zatímco její podobu mluvenou představují přepisy vysokoškolských přednášek.

Substantivní fráze jako jeden z důležitých prostředků kondenzace je ve vysokoškolském jazyce často využívána a to zejména v psané formě. Pomocí komplexní modifikace v rámci substantivní fráze je možné vyjádřit na relativně malém prostoru i složité myšlenky. Protože však vysokoškolské přednášky obsahují prvky jazyka mluveného, očekává se, že je výskyt používání substantivních frází s komplexní modifikací menší než u psaných článků. Ve více případech se očekává naopak používání jednoduchých frází a frází s modifikací ve formě vedlejší věty.

Cílem této práce je srovnání užívání substantivních frází v těchto dvou varietách akademického jazyka a to zejména z hlediska jejich vnitřní struktury, délky a syntaktické funkce.

Metodologicky je práce založena na analýze 210 dokladů substantivních frází. Jelikož se práce snaží porovnat dva různé druhy akademického jazyka, byly vzorky pro každou ze dvou forem excerpované zvlášť.

Pro psaný jazyk byly zkoumány tři Britské profesionální akademické články z oblasti humanitních věd publikované během posledních 20 let. Z každého z článků se vybralo 35 frází. Celý vzorek tedy obsahuje 105 dokladů.

Pro mluvené přednášky se excerpovaly tři přepisy přednášek z databáze korpusu *BASE (Corpus of British Academic Spoken English)*. Přednášky pocházejí také z oblasti

humanitních věd, jejichž témata se shodovala s vybranými články. Z každé přednášky se vybralo 35 dokladů (dohromady 105 frází).

Z hlediska struktury je práce rozdělena do několika částí. Po stručném úvodu následuje část teoretická, která uvádí substantivní frázi, její strukturu a použití. Následují obecné charakteristiky psaného a mluveného akademického jazyka a jejich specifické vlastnosti.

Teoretická část práce je založena zejména na *Longman Grammar of Written and Spoken English* (1999) Bibera a kol., dále na *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985) Quirka a kol., na *Elektronické mluvnici současné angličtiny* (2012) Duškové a kol. a částečně také na *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (2002) Huddlestona a Pulluma. Dalšími zdroji byly *Noun modification in fiction and academic prose* (2009) Duškové, nebo také *The distribution of finite and participial postmodifiers in fiction and academic prose* (2005) Šaldové.

Charakteristiky mluveného a psaného akademického jazyka se dále opírají o zdroje jako *Challenging stereotypes about academic writing: Complexity, elaboration, explicitness* (2010) Bibera a Grayové, *University Language: A corpus-based study of spoken and written registers* (2002) Bibera, nebo také *Academic language: An exploration of university classroom and textbook language* (2004) Reppenové. Dalšími zdroji byly i *Academic Discours: English in a Global Context* (2009) Hylanda a *"What I want you to remember is ...": Audience orientation in monologic academic discourse* (2012) Adelové.

Hlavní část diplomové práce tvoří výzkum a dále je rozdělena do několik dalších podkapitol. V první sekci je uvedena metodologie výzkumu a popis práce s materiálem. Nejprve jsou popsány zdroje výzkumného materiálu a poté je dopodrobna rozebrán způsob

shromažďování a rozřídění analyzovaných dat. Popsaná jsou také problematická místa analýzy.

Analyzované substantivní fráze byly rozříděny podle několika kritérií - druh a komplexnost modifikace (bez modifikace, jen premodifikace, jen postmodifikace, kombinace pre- i postmodifikace); syntaktická funkce; počet slov; forma premodifikace; forma postmodifikace; použití vícenásobné modifikace nebo hlavy; počet vedlejších vět vložených do modifikace a na závěr pozice vzhledem k slovesu (v případě frází v adverbiální funkci).

Výsledky analýzy samotné jsou seřazeny podle jednotlivých kritérií, kterými se jednotlivé části analýzy zabývaly. V každé části analýzy jsou nejdříve shrnuty nálezy ze vzorku psaného jazyka, pak ze vzorku jazyka mluveného a následně je uvedeno srovnání obou vzorků.

Výsledky začínají druhem modifikace a délkou substantivních frází. Následuje část věnující se jejich syntaktické funkci. Výsledky uzavírají podrobnější analýzy formy premodifikace a postmodifikace v obou vzorcích. Praktická část je shrnuta v závěrečné kapitole diplomové práce.

V samotném závěru diplomové práce nalezneme seznam všech použitých zdrojů a také přílohu, kterou tvoří úryvky textů, z nichž byly substantivní fráze excerpované.

Co se týče hypotézy práce, ta se až na některé její aspekty z velké části potvrdila, což je také shrnuto v závěru práce.

Potvrdila se část hypotézy, která předpokládala, že substantivní fráze v psaném akademickém jazyce obsahují více případů s komplexní modifikací. Potvrdilo se také, že přepisy přednášek obsahují více frází jednoduchých (tj. bez modifikace). Neukázaly se však

žádné rozdíly v počtu frází, které obsahovaly jen premodifikaci nebo jen postmodifikaci. Fráze v psaném jazyce byly také v souladu s očekáváním delší a obsahující větší počet slov.

Při analýze syntaktických funkcí se nepotvrdila hypotéza, že by vzorky ukazovaly relativně srovnatelné výsledky. Substantivní fráze v psaném akademickém jazyce se častěji vyskytovaly ve funkci předmětu a adverbia, zatímco v mluvené vzorku se častěji vyskytovaly ve funkci předmětu.

Část hypotézy, která předpokládala, že mluvený jazyk bude častěji využívat modifikaci ve formě vedlejší věty, zatímco jazyk psaný bude více spoléhat na předložkové fráze, se potvrdila jen částečně. I když platí, že v přednáškách se modifikace ve formě vedlejší věty vyskytovala častěji, předložková fráze byla dominantní formou modifikace jak v psané, tak i v mluvené části vzorku.

Další částečně potvrzená část hypotézy předpokládala, že zatímco v psaných akademických článcích bude hlavní forma premodifikace substantivní fráze, v přednáškách bude dominantní fráze adjektivní. I když se premodifikace ve formě věcné fráze vyskytovala v psané formě častěji, adjektivní fráze zůstala na prvním místě v obou částech analýzy.

V závěru se tedy potvrdilo, že substantivní fráze v psaném akademickém jazyce je skutečně delší a struktura její modifikace je obecně komplexnější. Ukázalo se však také, že míra, do jaké se tyto dva vzorky odlišují, není vždy tak vysoká, jak se původně předpokládalo.



## Appendix – Source Texts

### CHILD LIT W

The general question underpinning the investigation reported here is: ‘What is distinctive about the discourse of the CLLIP corpus?’ The first more specific question to be derived from this one examines relative frequencies within the three corpora, with an interest not only in the frequencies of words, but also in sequences of words. 1. What similarities and differences are there in the overall frequencies of words, parts of speech, and word and POS sequences in the three corpora? The investigation was focused further in order to explore the issue of whether language deployed in writing for children can be seen to represent the world and human experience differently from the ways in which they are represented in writing for adults. Researchers into fiction written for children have noted the role it plays in their socialisation, and how these texts are inevitably suffused with ideology (Hunt 1992; Lesnik-Oberstein 1994; Sealey 2000; Stephens 1992; Wall 1991). Few, however, have taken a corpus linguistic approach to analysis, although there are some exceptions. Stubbs (1996) used corpus techniques to analyse gender-related differences in two specific texts addressed to boys and girls, and he cites Baker and Freebody’s (1989) analysis of the different distributions of the lemmas *girl*, *boy* and *child* and their collocates in initial reading books (p. 94). Knowles and Malmkjaer’s study (1996) is in the ‘critical linguistics’ tradition, concerned with how ‘an awareness of patterns of textual structure and of language choices may provide information about how the author wants his/her readers to view society’ (p. 263), and they use a Hallidayan framework for their clause level analysis and ‘a neo-Firthian framework for the analysis of collocation’ (p. 69). Concordancing was used in some parts of this study to analyse collocational patterns, with a particular interest in how the selection of linguistic expression functions ideologically in this genre of discourse, which is: [...] Our

own approach is rather different, and concerned particularly with the ways in which the world is represented to the child reader — itself an issue which has occupied many researchers into children's literature. Wall (1991), for example, suggests that "... the narrator-narratee relationship ... is the distinctive marker of a children's book" (p. 9), and she provides an extensive overview of the changing ways during the last two centuries in which adults have met the challenge of writing for children, and about children's concerns, while standing in relation neither to the world nor to their subject matter as the implied child reader does. Writers of fiction for children have a range of options about their authorial stance [...]

## **TV DRAMAS W**

A case can be made so that representations of schools and schooling in film and television share a sufficient number of conventions such as setting, character and plot to justify the claim that they constitute a recognisable 'school' genre. Even as genre evolves to maintain audience appeal and topicality, later dramas are at the same time are constrained by past representational conventions in line with audience expectations. Thus the three British television dramas discussed inherited a number of standard representational characteristics from cinematic and previous television portrayals - the school as a site of conflict, the 'problem' student(s), and the teacher or Head Teacher (Principal) as central protagonists, in causing or resolving such conflict. The 'school' film and television drama or comedy have a history of drawing on contemporary social, political, or educational discourses to construct the representation of the inner-city school and the work of teachers\*whether this be fears in America and Britain about 'juvenile delinquency' in the 1950s and 1960s, or later concerns about student under-achievement, classroom disorder and teacher quality. Hollywood films since *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) have familiarised viewers with the setting of the urban secondary or high school as a 'battleground' to be conquered (Bulman, 2005; Dalton, 2004;

Farber & Holm, 1994; Smith, 1999). Although representations of schools and schooling have occurred less frequently in British film (here defined as films made in Britain about British schools), *Spare the Rod* (1961) and *To Sir with Love* (1967) perpetuated the image of the teacher - hero struggling to 'civilise' and inspire students in the 'urban jungle' of the inner-city secondary school. Often isolated and conservative (Thomas, 1998), the image of the Head Teacher has varied from being seen as a contributory or causal factor in the demise of these schools or more rarely (*The Principal*, 1987; *Lean on Me*, 1989), as the instrument of their salvation, overcoming the challenge of 'problem' students and 'bad' teachers to transform violent and low achieving schools (see Smith, 1999; Thomas, 1998; Thomsen, 1993; Wells & Serman, 1998). It has been on television, however, not film, that fictional representations of British schools and schooling [...]

## **ROMBRI W**

Most of the buildings found at Wroxeter were identified by pattern recognition of rubble spreads, though a rather different, and perhaps more convincing, structural sequence of postholes and post pads was noted to the north, in *insula* 2 (Barker *et al.* 1997: 23—24; Roskams *pers. comm.*). It is Building 10, however, which is the key structure for the 'Great Rebuilding' of phase Z. A 'single huge platform of rubble hardcore' across the top of the former nave, north aisle and north portico of the basilica was interpreted as the foundation of a vast timber-framed structure c. 33.5m X 15.5m and reconstructed in drawings as a rectangular three-storey towered building (Figure 2)—"among the last classically inspired buildings constructed in Britain before the seventeenth century" (Barker 1975: 114). This rubble was found immediately under the plough soil. Barker states that a key factor that helped in its recognition was that it was observed before any robber trenches or archaeological trenches had been emptied: [...] Evaluation of the nature of this supposed structure is made difficult by the presentation of the evidence. I suspect most readers have

looked at the reconstruction drawings and the oft-repeated phase plans rather than the 177 loose-leaf A3 drawings which depict the primary recording method Barker used (Everill & White 2011: 175-76). The evidence is only presented in the actual drawings of the rubble and it requires the piecing together of three large plans (A123, A124 and A125) to see the primary evidence. Figure 3 shows these stitched together digitally and with the outline of the structure lifted from the interpretation plans [...]

## **CHILD LIT S**

the first issue i'm going to talk about is the idea that childhood like every other identity is an idea it is not despite what most critics say and they say very strange things about childhood it is not a biological or somehow some kind of genetic truth neither is there a kind of psychological truth about it no matter what many critics assume and what they say er it's the same case for those of you who are going to do be doing women's writing or if you think about gender there is not a truth about women or about femininity these are cultural ideas er it's significant that we don't talk in the same way about masculinity as being a psychological or a biological or a genetic issue for instance er one famous geneticist that i know of who got very very irritated with the kind of simplistic assumptions some other people make about the role of science in determining identify once said well for instance we have one huge piece of information which is we know exactly er what has to do with the majority of people genetically becoming criminals and all the other geneticists he was talking about went [gasp] what big piece of news is this what huge thing has been discovered and in fact of course as you probably will already have guessed what he was talking about was the fact that most criminals are men [...]

## **ROM BRI S**

er last week i was dealing with the invasions of Julius Caesar and from the point of view of the reasons that he gives for the fifty-five and fifty-four invasions i hope that the main

message came across was that he actually does give us some form of reasoning and motivation for his fifty-five invasion even if we have to read between the lines to establish it whereas for the fifty-four invasion there is very little concrete evidence within his commentaries and the reason for this i think is fairly clear that if he had actually stated when he came to write his commentaries years later if he'd actually stated a motive in coming to Britain that year he could well have found himself in difficulties with a charge of not having achieved that particular aim after all if conquest was his aim then he singularly failed to achieve it if economic gain was his aim as it was and certainly was certainly for some of his er companions [...]

## **TV DRAMAS**

this is the cover of the Radio Times can you see that it's got Helen Baxendale [laughter] and er Mandy Patinkin yeah it's hot docs why we're addicted to medical dramas why we're addicted to medical dramas er and the and the date of that is ninety-five June ninety-five and that's really the high point of the medical drama in Britain it's at that point the medical drama was the er the power genre of the nineteen-nineties today er the power genre is obviously something different er you might call it makeover television tune in on a on prime time on a Friday night er there's a succession of makeover programmes rooms being makeover people er gardens so on and so on so i-, it's a different power genre but certainly the mid-nineteen-nineties nineteen-ninety-five er think there were about three covers of the Radio Times that had references to medical dramas on it er so the Radio Times was quick to cash in on er what had become this power genre of the mid-nineteen-nineties the medical dramas [...]